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THE CLUB-BOOK;

BEING

ORIGINAL TALES,

BY

JAMES, PICKEN, GALT, POWER, JERDAN, GOWER, MOIR, CUNNINGHAM, HOGG, RITCHIE, &c.

EDITED BY

THE AUTHOR OF "THE DOMINIE'S LEGACY."

TWO VOLUMES IN ONE.

NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED BY HARPER & BROTHERS,

NO. 82 CLIFF-STREET,

1836

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INTRODUCTORY.

Whenever any thing in the least degree promising novelty, or tending to innovation, is aimed at in the world, particularly within the well-warded territories of literature; it is reasonably expected that some plea shall be offered for thus impertinently swerving from the good old beaten tract of imitation.

In accounting, then, for our present conduct in putting forth a publication of the lighter sort, which is meant to differ as well from the numerous race of pretty picture-books of winter, with their lady-like poetry, and their refined romance, as from the general performances of our novelists,—wherein, by great art and painstaking, and often sorely against the will both of reader and hero, they contrive to draw out the lengthened sweetness of those valuable productions, to the exact measure of bibliopolical prescription—never were men more fortunate than we, for we have to bring forward in our favour no less a personage than the great goddess of Fashion herself, who, in these innovating times, hath decidedly pointed her autocratic finger in the very direction which we have obediently taken.

This omnipotent regulator of the great concerns of literature and millinery, then, this mistress of the ceremonies even to politics and religion, having first set up a series of magnificent palaces at the western end of our metropolis, under the name of club houses, and caused to associate together into them numerous bodies of worthy men who have little to do; next in the course of the clubbing fever which naturally

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followed, threw her handkerchief in the most inviting manner to all persons ambitious of being considered literary, and said to them in a voice of potency, if not of thunder, "Go ye and do likewise." How far the mandate of our great ruler has been obeyed *in the letter*, by the setting up of an additional club with a literary title, it does not perhaps become us strictly to inquire. A higher power even than Fashion herself—namely, that irresistible system of improvement which seems now abroad in the world, hath revealed to us and to all men (who, blessed with that recondite degree of penetration elegantly termed the possession of *half an eye*, are disposed to look into the tendencies of things), that it is now time it should be obeyed *in the spirit*, for reasons applying both to literary men and to the world, which are too grave as well as numerous to be here entered upon. Be that, however, as it may, this peculiar tendency of our time—this increasing spirit of segregation and of union, both at home and abroad, of which it were well that our men of talent engaged in literature more generally partook, hath furnished the collector and part writer of the following pieces with that necessary desideratum, a tolerably suitable title, under which the whole may be appropriately presented to the public.

Upon the subject of the clubs and all that pertains to them, however, we would willingly, were it at all expedient, take the present opportunity of saying a few words. Not that we ourselves have any such inconvenient discernment, as to see evil in a thing that is decidedly in fashion, so long as the fashion is fairly supported by the goddess. But considering ourselves bound on all occasions to take the part of the ladies, it hath been put into our heads to offer on their parts on this occasion a few words of gentle expostulation, with the honourable members of these great establishments.

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It is well known, that since the clubs have come in, marriage has entirely gone *out*. The reason is obvious. How can young men of moderate fortunes be expected to confine themselves to an ordinary establishment and plain English fare, when for a tithe of the expense they can live in a palace and enjoy every sort of luxury? How can it be expected that a gentleman should marry for the old-fashioned motives of comfort and society, when the clubs and their appendages supply all this at a tenth of the cost? What is the consequence? Marriage is completely at a stand! White favours, special licenses, and honeymoons are almost forgotten. The spinsters increase on every side, and even the few married men now alive and getting old, have entirely deserted their own homes, to live, habit, and repute at their club house! What is the world to do? Are the ladies to betake themselves to nunneries, according to the project of Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who, like other advice givers, was, as we all know, particularly inclined to that nunnish life which she once strongly recommended to others? Something must be done. In these reforming times, the ladies must have a reform of their own. Already they cry out for it loudly whenever they meet. Nay, they are beginning among themselves to talk absolute radicalism in regard to the clubs, and be they rotten-boroughs or be they close-boroughs, the men, say they, "must not be suffered to *barrow* so constantly about those luxurious establishments, or if they do there is no hope for us." We have heard of several projects being in actual discussion to bring marriage again into fashion, which it would neither be wise nor delicate in us here to broach. Now all this may be laughed at by some, and sport to the Malthusians,—but it is death to the ladies!

Grievous as this matter must doubtless be to many of that interesting sex for whom we would stand up against any, the most decided improvement in which

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they are not included, we have the satisfaction to think that no such objection can be urged against our simple arrangement. Clubbing of wits,—or different individuals telling a series of tales in one book,—is too intellectual an exercise to have any serious effect in putting a stop to matrimony. At least, we should hope so; for so it happens that we are all married men, and it is generally found in the world that those who are in any trouble themselves are quite pleased to see as many as possible inveigled into similar circumstances.

But not to predicate any thing upon this matter, we cannot avoid adding a grave word upon the subject of a favourite project of ours: namely, the association together as much as possible of men of talent and character, who are professionally engaged in literary pursuits. We know it is in the nature of man, that those divided into their respective coteries of sociality, or throughout the connexions of bibliopolical competition, should be ready to say, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos," &c., and so bend their minds to all the littlenesses of detraction and opposition. Yet among other orders of men, whose labours have less to do with the world at large, we have heard of such a thing as an *esprit du corps*, which accomplished much good and obviated much evil; and we imagine we see something in the near distance,—even in England, where men of letters are comparatively neglected,—which promises that not long hence they will be disposed voluntarily to say, like the two kings of Israel, "Come and let us look one another in the face."

Whether, however, he has any prophetic discernment or not, the Editor of the following tales, &c. has dreamed, in his moments of sanguine speculation, of the many advantages both public and personal which might arise from the friendly association of those who have much to do with that great modern power, public opinion. But this is not the place to speak further

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upon so grave a subject; and doubtless he who indulges himself with the penning of these sentiments, and who has made that beginning in literary association which may be implied in this friendly collection, is not worthy to keep a door to a club of real *savantes*, yet in all matters of private pursuit or public spirit, it is wonderful what a love for any thing, and an occasional gleam of sanguine enthusiasm will, by perseverance, effect.

But we feel we are taking a liberty with the public for which our respected constituents have given us no express authority; so, to end our introduction, we would only further in their name say to the good-natured reader, though the following stories are comparatively but trifles, yet considering the difficulty in the present hackneyed state of this sort of literature, of writing short tales which may obtain the attention of those who have not leisure or taste for two-volume undertaking, you will please to believe that we have done our best as a first offer for your amusement, both as to interest and variety. To conclude, then, this friendly parley with the reader, we would further say to her or him, in the manner of the older authors,—"Gentle men and gentler maidens—dames ever fair and ever fascinating, who read tales of love, because for it ye were formed, and smile or sigh as your feelings are affected, because form and feeling are your most engaging attributes—also critics stern, penetrating and severe, with spectacle on nose and snuff at elbow,—sit down all when you are in an amiable humour, and when reading is no toil, but a mental relaxation, and be pleased if you can with our CLUB-BOOK."

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THE CLUB-BOOK.

BERTRAND DE LA CROIX;

OR,

THE SIEGE OF RHODES.

By G. P. R. JAMES.*

CHAPTER I.

I'll follow this good man; and go with you,
And having sworn truth, ever will be true.
SHAKESPEARE.

It was on the evening of one of those uncertain days of spring which winter and summer seem to fix upon as a common battle-field, now frowning with clouds of sleet and hail, and now smiling with as bright a glance as if the blue eye of heaven had never known a tear: it was on the evening of such a day, in the beginning of the year 1522, that, in the public room of entertainment of a small inn at Beaucaire with his feet placed upon the large iron dogs which supported a wood fire—one foot upon one and the other upon the other—sat a young traveller, turning over the red fagots on the hearth with the steel tip of his sword-scabbard.

His form was light though muscular, and he had more the appearance of great agility than of great strength. Yet he was cast so heedlessly on his seat, and his limbs seemed to fall with such a nerveless heaviness that the promise of activity afforded by his figure was belied by the listlessness of his air, and he might have passed for one of the habitual *hostelrie*

* Author of "Richelieu," "Darnley," "De L'Orme," "Philip Augustus," &c.

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loungers of the period, had not a certain meditative sadness in his countenance spoken a mind overcome by bitter thoughts, rather than a body consumed by customary sloth. His habit was good but not new, and a scanty portion of fur and gold about his mantle seemed to say that the wearer's inclination for splendid apparel was more confined by the narrowness of his purse than by any circumstance of birth or any simplicity of taste.

There was no one in the chamber but himself, and totally given up to deep and seemingly sad meditations, he continued stirring the embers with the point of his sword-scabbard, apparently unconscious both of the occupation in which he was engaged and the instrument which he employed in it. A tankard of strong Rhone wine stood untouched upon the table; and while the wind whistled through the ill-stopped cracks of the poor tenement in which he sat, almost extinguishing the lights in the sconce, and the rain of a sharp night-shower dashed angrily against the casement, he unconsciously sung a verse or two of an old Spanish ballad, which had probably as much resemblance to the real matter of his thoughts as the *Tourbillons* of Descartes had to the system of the universe.

"Mas de las penas que siento
Esta es la mas principal,
Porque perderme yo sola,
Al perder llaman ganar.
Y en perderos vos, Senora,
Es perder sin mas cobrar;
Mas pues assi lo querais
No lo queramos dilatar."

So he sung: and, indeed, it is an extraordinary fact, that under the pressure of many a heavy grief, the heart will very often find a voice in music for sorrows that are silent to language. In such cases the words to which the melody are joined are nothing. It is the music that is eloquent; and never did a more melancholy tone breathe forth the feelings of a sad and troubled spirit. His thoughts, his sensations, his very external senses seemed so powerfully concentrated on

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some deep and absorbing theme, that the ordinary occurrences that passed around him were veiled from his eyes and ears.

A troop of horses stopped at the inn-gate; and the clattering hoofs and jangling of their caparisons might have awakened the seven sleepers; but his dream remained unbroken, and he marked not one of all the many sounds which trumpet the arrival of a large company at a poor inn.

A fine manly voice was then heard giving manifold directions to some mute attendants. "Cross the ferry with all speed! and then on to Arles.—The horses are quite fresh.—'Tis but three leagues.—Tell the noble prior that I remain behind on business at Beaucaire, but that I come onward to-morrow; and you, Brother Francis, see that the arms be all arrived, and examine well that they be in good condition. Think of all things for the good of the order,—'Watch and pray!'"

With such injunctions, half-clerical, half-military, the speaker concluded; the clattering of the hoofs again echoed along the street, mingling as it receded with the howling of the wind, the pattering of the rain, and the roaring of the angry Rhone; and, after a little more bustle at the door, the worthy host with various nondescript attendants ushered in the stranger, who had remained behind, and whose step, as he strode up to the hearth, was the first thing which roused the original tenant of the room from his dream of other times.

The young man started, and for a moment looked bewildered, as one whose thoughts had been far, far away; then rose from his stool, and fixing his eyes for an instant intently on the face of his new companion, he withdrew from the monopolizing position in which he had placed himself before the fire, and with a graceful inclination of the head made room for the other to share in the warm smile of cold, stern winter's most cheerful opponent.

The stranger shook his robe, which was drenched with the night-rain, and took his seat by the fire, gazing for a brief space on his young companion, with one of

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those glances of quick examination which we are wont to bestow on him that is to be our fellow for an hour—rapid, but keen—superficial, but comprehensive. His own occupation was at once denoted by the dark robe and eight-limbed cross worn by the knights of St. John of Rhodes; and his tall martial form, his broad splendid brow, round the high contour of which the gray locks of eld curled unthinned and luxuriant, his eye full of fire and intellect, his proud lip, on whose patrician bend hung a world of energy and command, all bespoke one of the best knights of that gallant order, the stumblingblock of the Saracen power, and the bulwark of Christendom.

All this was easily read, and one hasty glance was sufficient to satisfy the younger traveller; but he himself presented a page which his companion found harder to decipher. His dress was of that middle rank which in those days was less common in every country of the world than it is now. Each class was then more distinct: the peasant trod less upon the kibe of the peer, and every species and genus in that branch of zoology called society was in general to be known immediately by some external mark, as distinctive as the beaks of the accipitrine or the legs of the gruine tribe. The young stranger, however, in simplicity of apparel, touched somewhat upon the class of burghers, while a casual ornament of a higher grade spoke pretensions to a more elevated birth.

The first glance the knight of Rhodes had given did not satisfy him, and he again ran his eye over the stranger's dress: then, still undetermined, he turned it to his face, and read, or thought he read, the traces of tender education and gentle breeding in the fine, clear, defined lines of his features, and the flash of his dark, melancholy eye; while the extreme whiteness of the upper part of his forehead, which was commonly shaded by his hat, contrasted strongly with the ruddy, sun-burned hue of the rest of his countenance.

What had been apparently a severe wound was still covered with a long black patch upon his cheek; and

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as the younger traveller suddenly roused himself from one of his deep fits of thought, and surprised the eyes of his companion fixed upon his face, the knight of St. John took that wound as the pass-word to conversation, saying,—

"You have been in the late wars, young sir, I see."

"I have, Sir Knight," was the reply; and the younger stranger again sank into silence.

"Was it in the wars of Navarre, of Flanders, or of Burgundy?" demanded the other; "I have a motive for my curiosity, young gentleman, better than curiosity alone."

"And I have no motive for concealment," replied the young soldier; "I served in Navarre," and he was again silent.

There was a degree of cold and somewhat haughty reserve in his manner, that seemed to offend the knight of St. John, who doubtless looked upon the advances of an old and distinguished member of so renowned an order as an honour to which any stripling soldier might reply with somewhat more free respect. A cloud came over his brow, and his eye sparkled for an instant, but such signs of heat passed by immediately.

"After all," muttered he to himself, "we are but poor friars, or at least poor soldiers of Christ; we should be humbler than we are. In Navarre," he added aloud, "I have a brave nephew, my dead brother's only son, who is fighting under the noble Andrew de Foix to restore to Henry d'Albert his natural dominions of Navarre; I would fain hear news of him, young sir. In your campaigns have you met with the young Duke of Nivelle?"

"There was such a person in the army," replied the soldier, "and I remember we won our knightly spurs together at the taking of Pampeluna; but the difference of our fortunes threw us far apart. I saw him once, however, in the prison at Logrogno."

"In prison!" exclaimed the knight; "in prison!"

"Ay, in prison!" replied the young soldier. "Have you not heard of our defeat, and the taking of the young

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Count de Foix and all his officers?—'tis an old tale with us. Some three weeks gone we fought the Spanish army and were beaten,—'tis an old tale now."

"But I have been travelling quick, though long, my son," replied the knight, "and have thought of nothing but how best to fulfil my duty towards the grand master and my order, by sending arms and provisions to Rhodes against the menaced invasion of the Turks. Speak, sir: was my nephew still in prison?—how did you yourself escape?—does he require ransom?—where is he confined?"

The youth gazed on his elder companion for a moment with a glance in which the eager anxiety of the knight's questions seemed to have awakened a corresponding energy; but instantly the light faded away, and the same cold shadow fell over his face.

"In truth I cannot tell," he replied gravely, "whether the Duke de Nivelle be still in prison or not. He sent to Toulouse for money to pay his ransom, and doubtless it has reached him by this time. I myself escaped by accident, and go to try my sword under the new Grand Master of Rhodes against the Turks."

The knight of St. John paused thoughtfully for a moment, as if there was something in the youth's reply that had struck him deeply. "The new Grand Master of Rhodes!" he said at length thoughtfully. "It is strange that I, a prior of the order, should first hear that there is a new Grand Master of Rhodes from the lips of a stranger; but De Merail loves me not. When he offered me his daughter for my nephew in marriage I refused an alliance with a man of his great pride, and now he loves me not, and doubtless has never notified to me his election that I may be the last informed of the order. So Fabricius Carette, that valiant prince, is dead, and De Merail has of course been elected in his place?"

While his companion thus spoke, half-communing with himself, half-carrying on the conversation in which they had been engaged, the young soldier had apparently relapsed into thought, and with his eyes fixed

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again upon the embers, seemed far away in some silent world of his own. Nothing showed that he heard the good knight's words, till at length, without a change of feature, he replied abstractedly, "Carette, indeed, is dead! De Merail has lost the election of which he was so sure, and Villiers de l'Isle Adam is Grand Master of Rhodes."

The knight of St. John started on his feet. "I! —I!" cried he. "Impossible! utterly impossible! How should De Merail lose his election, with wealth, and rank, and influence,—and be it said too, with valour, and wisdom, and talent? And how should I be chosen—absent, and probably almost forgotten? But tell me, sir, who are you who know so much more of my order than myself?"

"A poor gentleman of Tourain," replied the youth, "Bertrand de la Croix by name, and it is easy to tell how I learned all the news I give you. 'Tis but two days since that landing at Marseilles from Spain I met with a whole train of knights and serving brothers of the order of St. John, who had been at Paris, seeking in vain for *you*—if you, indeed, as your words imply, be the newly-elected Grand Master of Rhodes. I came on hither, having some business at Toulouse, and intending instantly to make my way back, and, with the first bark sailing to take a passage for Rhodes, with the purpose of there offering my sword to the grand master on the threatened invasion of the Turks. That sword I now offer with all my heart—accept it, sir, for it is the first drawn in your service."

The grand master stood for a moment mute, with his eye fixed upon vacancy, while a crowd of new sensations filled his bosom: hopes, doubts, anxieties, pride chastened by moderation, ambition elevated and purified by religion and disinterestedness. A crowd of new ideas, too, whirled through his brain—cares, dangers, difficulties, much to be met, and much to be overcome, much to be prevented, and much to be crushed. The sudden announcement of his new station changed like the touch of death his state of exist-

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ence; his relation to every thing around was altered, he was in a new world, where all was new, vague, uncertain, indistinct, unfamiliarized with his mind and heart; yet still it is not to be denied that the whole was pleasing. However much we may guard against the seductions of our vanity, that Dalilah of the human mind, her blandishments will still be sweet, even though they win us not to evil. He could not hide from himself that the tidings were gratifying to him, and he that had first communicated them found the avenues of his heart opened by the news tha he had given.

The grand master laid his hand kindly upon his young companion's shoulder: "Your sword, young sir," he said, "is willingly accepted by the order of St. John, for, by my faith, we shall need the assistance of all our friends, if the news which I have gathered in Hungary be correct regarding the preparations of the Turk. But should what you tell me of my election be true—and I will not doubt it—I must instantly forward to Marseilles to meet the deputies of the council; although, God help us, I must therefore abandon the design I had formed of going on into Navarre to see my poor nephew, whom I have not met for these fifteen long years. Would that I could find any one worthy of confidence who would bear a letter for me to my poor Nivelle, if he be still in prison, or would absolutely ascertain that he is free."

The grand master fixed his eyes upon his young companion, who at once understood his meaning, and accepted the commission. Nor let it be thought extraordinary that Bertrand de la Croix thus readily undertook a fatiguing journey, and a difficult, perhaps a dangerous enterprise, for a person he had seen but for one short hour. In those days the reverence for age itself was great, and for high military renown still greater. The name of Villiers de l'Isle Adam was gloriously known throughout all Europe, and even without having, like Bertrand, taken service under him, which rendered his request almost a command, there was probably scarcely a young soldier in all France who would have

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hesitated to do his will, had it sent him to the uttermost parts of the earth.

A few brief explanations ensued. The grand master informed his young companion that with all his impatience to depart for Rhodes, he would be still obliged to wait at Marseilles for several weeks, embarking the military stores and reinforcements, which during many months he had been employed in collecting for the defence of the order; and it was agreed that the young soldier should with all speed rejoin him there, bringing with him, if possible, the old knight's nephew, the Duke of Niveile. The letter was then written, some business concluded between the grand master and the merchants of Beaucaire, and the two travellers separated, to proceed the next day each upon his own path.

CHAPTER II.

When I view the beauties of thy face,
I fear not death, nor dangers, nor disgrace.
DRYDEN.

The sun had risen and set, and risen again, since we last left Bertrand de la Croix, and now he was in Spain. Not, indeed, in either Navarre or Castile, but in the rich and beautiful land of Catalonia, upon that lovely shore that casts its splendid smile over the bright waters of the Mediterranean Sea. A high old tower, perched upon a wild, bold rock, from the scanty earth of which a thousand shrubs and trees sprang up and waved their green branches in the sunshine of a Spanish spring, looked over on the one hand a wide tract of hill and dale, and wood and pasture, and river and cascade, and on the other hung beetling above the waves.

France and Spain were at enmity, and invading armies lay upon the frontier of each; but there wandered

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the young French soldier, through that fair scene, enjoying all its beauties; nor did he seem to fear aught of evil or interruption. The cloud had passed from his brow also, and indeed a magic more potent than northern spells seemed to have been used to dispel it, for as he wound down from the castle along the meandering and sunny path, as fair a creature as ever Nature in her sweetest and most witching mood created hung upon his arm, with that fond confidence which only love, full, deep, undoubting love can give. Far out of earshot, toying with one of those gay and silky dogs whose true though fawning attachment and whose obedient love have become almost a by-word in the mouth of perverse man, came an old sedate dame, clothed in hood and wimple of deep black, with prim, subservient features, touched with a grim look of habitual acid, which at once denoted the duenna. Down in the valley too, two pages, of the true page breed, pert, happy, thoughtless, and as fine as new-blown buttercups, held the proud horse which had borne the young soldier thither, and which, glancing his clear eye around, with raised ear and pawing hoof, seemed anxious for his lord's return, to dart away and revel in his fleetness and his strength.

But Bertrand de la Croix was in no haste to quit such fair company; and as he strayed onward, and ever and anon gazed fondly on the lovely being by his side, a thousand varied expressions of happiness lit up his features, changing from the gay and laughing glance of sparkling joy to the calm, placid smile of bland content. Nor were the dark full eyes that looked upon him sad, though there was a tenderer tone in their delight, and at times a shade, as if of melancholy, would dim the light that darted through their long and silken lashes.

At length, as the path wound round the hill, there suddenly broke upon the eye, through the fluttering canopy of the leaves and boughs, a bright far view over the sunshiny sea; and Bertrand paused, and stretching forth his hand towards it, he exclaimed—

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"Over the sea, Isabel! over the sea! Quick, quick, if you love me! rapidly as Juno's messenger, or as the winged will of Jove! You are not frightened, dearest, at those dark blue waves! Look how they dance and smile in the golden sunlight, as if to woo your small feet to the bark that shall bear you, like the floating feather of some snowy bird, to the spicy island of the east! Oh, no! no! so fair a thing as thou art should never fear; 'tis not in the cold cruelty of the most treacherous sea to hurt thee, far less so bright a plain of calm blue waters as that. No, no! it shall be I who will fear, and listen for every wind, lest it rock my Isabel too roughly, and chide every wave, lest it disturb her slumbers! It is I will fear!"

The lady shook her head. "You fear!" she answered: "you know not what fear is, Bertrand. I do fear—yet still, if that sea which, with all its multitude of false-smiling waves, looks even now like eternity, were trebled in extent, I would cross them all to make you happy. But still, though it is very, very delightful to hope, do not let us deceive ourselves too far. When I tell you that my father has summoned me to Rhodes, you seem to think that every thing is over, and yet forget that he has said fire and water shall sooner unite than we with his consent."

"Rash words, dear Isabel! rash words!" replied her lover; "soon said and soon recanted. Fear not! fear not! I have a thousand ways to win him; and such good havoc shall my sword make among the Turks, that for very shame he shall not dare refuse me. Then, too, I shall see you every day, and your dear eyes shall be the fortunate planets of my house, and light me on to glory and to victory."

With such lover-like rhapsodies they wandered on, full of sweet thoughts; and though Isabel would hardly own how much she herself hoped, and how mingled with glad expectations were her fears of crossing the wide sea, yet still her lover's ardent words fell not on her ear without effect; and when the sad, inevitable moment of parting at length came, she too spoke the

mutual words of comfort and assurance, and owned that she felt happier, far happier than when last they parted, when he was about to speed alone over the dark waves to win a difficult consent from her stern, proud parent, and she had to remain behind in lonely expectation, waiting, comfortless, the uncertain event.

Bertrand gazed round to see if there was any one in sight, pressed her to his bosom, and printed his last adieu upon the dear soft lips whose words had given him so much happiness. Then bounding up the hill, he turned the corner of the rock, which had hidden them from the complacent duenna, laid a small but satisfactory purse in the palm of that worthy and discreet friend, and bidding her guard well her mistress in the approaching voyage, he turned away, and hastened to the valley where his horse was held.

"Have you delivered safely the sacks of money with the ransom?" demanded he of the elder page. The boy signified that he had fulfilled his orders, and placed a safe-conduct, as a passport was then called, in the hands of his master. "Well, then," continued Bertrand, "speed back to your fellows, and bring them with all haste to meet me at Marseilles. You, sirrah, hold the stirrup. But stay," he continued, "I had forgot the letter!" and drawing a step back, he produced the identical epistle written by the Grand Master of Rhodes to his nephew, and after pausing for an instant to consider, he cut the silk between the seals, muttering with a smile—"The contents may be fully as useful to Bertrand de la Croix as to the good Duke of Nivelle; so I see not why I should not read."

Thus saying, he perused the contents from beginning to end, thought for an instant in silence, and then, with a gay smile, tore the letter in a thousand pieces, and gave the fluttering fragments to the wind. A moment after he was upon his horse's back; and, with as upright a carriage as if he had violated no confidence reposed in him, the deceitful messenger of the grand master turned on his road to France. Gradually, however, as he spurred on his way, the bright memory of the happy

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hours he had passed with Isabel de Merail waned into regret; the splendid day-dream of young love, with all its many-coloured hues of delight, faded away like a dying rainbow, as the star which had lent it its brilliant tints was hidden by the cold cloud of absence. The gay sparkling of his look lasted but for half an hour; and, before night had fallen, he was nearly as cold and sad as when first we painted him in the inn at Beaucaire.

On his arrival at Marseilles, he found the grand master in all the bustle of active preparations. Knights and soldiers and serving brothers surrounded him; and in the palace of the bishop, who lodged and entertained the chief of the Christian knights with courtesy and magnificence, all was hurry, and crowd, and inquiry, and command. Bertrand de la Croix opened a path through a multitude of merchants and seamen, who waited the grand master's commands concerning military stores for Rhodes, and finding his way to that prince's presence, he gave an account of his journey, somewhat different, alas! from the true one. He had not been able to penetrate, he said, as far as Logrogno; but he had met a messenger speeding back to the Duke of Nivelle with his ransom, and to him he had confided the letter of the knight. He softened the mortification however, which he saw the grand master experienced at not receiving more satisfactory news of his nephew, by informing him that he had found means of enlisting fifty veteran volunteers, who were willing to serve the order of St. John, under his command, during the menaced attack of the Turks, however long that attack might be.

Villiers de l'Isle Adam gazed on his young companion for a moment with a look of some surprise; at length he answered, "If fifty veteran soldiers are willing to serve under so young a man, I have every reason to rely upon their judgment, and to look highly upon their commander; but we will inspect these troops, Sir Bertrand de la Croix."

The young soldier made no reply, but after the

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interval of a few days, his volunteers arrived, and were passed in review before the grand master, when their dark and war-worn countenances, their skill in the use of arms, and their correct and easy discipline, at once showed them choice companions for dangerous moments and bold attempts. Bertrand de la Croix rose in the opinion of the grand master; but though the knight of Rhodes felt his curiosity awakened, he would not descend to question the soldiers the young stranger had brought, and did not choose to make any inquiry of a man so reserved and uncommunicative as he had shown himself.

The troops and the stores were embarked with all possible speed, and at length Bertrand, at the desire of the grand master himself, entered the vessel which bore that prince to Rhodes, and accompanied him from the port of Marseilles on his voyage to the island of the order.

The sun shone upon their departure, and the various galleys and felucca which convoyed the bark of the grand master, bounding lightly over the blue waves, before a mild and favourable wind, rendered it a gay and splendid scene, as the armament sailed away from the sweet shores of France; but evil auguries of all kinds soon overclouded their passage. Before the ship was a day old at sea, a cry of fire was heard; in an instant the flames were seen running with frightful rapidity from spar to spar, from rope to rope, and from sail to sail. Whirlwinds of smoke and fire invested the whole ship, and drifted over the sea, and terror, confusion, and despair seemed to take possession of men who on other occasions had calmly met death and danger in a thousand varied forms. Some were mute and stupified, some cried wildly for help, where no help was near, and some sprang into the sea to avoid the more terrible fate around them. In that moment of peril there were but two who preserved that cool and ready firmness which combines all the best qualities of mental and corporeal courage—Bertrand de la Croix and the Grand Master of Rhodes; but their united efforts

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recalled the rest to hope and exertion. The fire was gradually arrested, diminished, extinguished, and the vessel though injured was preserved.

After a delay in order to refit, the ship pursued her way, but the high lands of Corsica were hardly out of sight, when the heavens, which had hitherto been as clear and smiling as a father's gaze upon the sleeping countenance of his first-born child, grew dark and stormy as an evil dream. The winds howled with a hot sharp gust, the rain fell, and the lightning blazed along the sky. Flash after flash rent the angry atmosphere, and at length the sharp white stream of liquid fire struck the vessel, pierced the deck, and blazed in the cabin of the grand master. For a moment the bright meteoric glare dazzled all eyes. None saw what passed around, and the intensity of the light rendered it akin to darkness; but when sight returned, Bertrand and Villiers de l'Isle Adam found four of their companions stretched lifeless on the floor. The storm passed away, and the bodies of the dead had sepulture in the bosom of that dark charnel the sea; but it was afterward found that the sword of the grand master had been broken by the lightning in its sheath, which itself bore no sign of fire,* and all augured evil to his government when it began with such prodigies and misfortunes.

Villiers smiled at evil auguries, and though at Syracuse he heard of pirates who waited him on his passage to Rhodes, he boldly pursued his voyage, passed every danger, and rounding Candia entered the golden expanse of the Carpathian Sea. A thousand bright islands gemmed the waters, and as the ship sailed on they were seen one after the other in the blue distance, invested with an airy and fantastic splendour, as if they were not really of the earth, but some of the grand phantasms of a splendid vision.

The heart of Bertrand de la Croix beat high, as he stood upon the deck and saw them one by one rise

* See Vertot Histoire de l'Ordre de Malte, vol. ii. p. 426.

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upon the view, pass by, and recede into the gray obscurity of space. The many memories which those climates recall—the spectres of a long-gone age of mighty glory—the voices of a thousand wonderful years saluted the young soldier as he sailed along, and for a time shared his bosom with the feelings, the wishes, the hopes, the regrets of the present.

At length Rhodes itself rose from the waves before him, and passing on towards its many-memoried port, he beheld the armed city of the Christian knights, stretching down towards the sea with its glorious gardens of the olive, the pomegranate, the fig, and the vine spreading over the uplands towards the clear unclouded sky.

CHAPTER III.

Duke. Now!—What's the business?
Sailor. The Turkish preparation makes for Rhodes, so was I bid report here to the state. *Othello.*

When Villiers de l'Isle Adam and his young companion first trod the shores of Rhodes, not a sign of approaching strife was to be seen. The island with all its dependencies slept in peace, and the sails of the galleys of the order flapped idly in the listless wind of the port.

But very soon after the installation of the grand master, the whole began to bear a new aspect. His eye, like that of the long-experienced mariner, which sees and prepares against the storm that is gathering afar, beheld at once the tempest of infidel war which was silently accumulating to break upon the order with double force, and he lost not a moment in putting the island into the most perfect state of defence. The affairs of peace were abandoned at once: stores were sought in every part of the earth; deep ditches chan

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fielded the ground in all directions round the city, and mighty fortifications were raised in addition to those which had before guarded the town and ports. The hand of desolation too was stretched forth over the land; and to ensure that neither the means of subsistence nor materials for offence might be furnished to the enemy by the country they were about to attack, the fields, the vineyards, the gardens were wasted, the olive-tree, the fig, and the pomegranate were cut down. The country-houses and the churches were razed to the ground: the very stones of which they were built were swept away, and the whole country was laid as bare and desolate as if the cultivating spirit of man had never made it blossom into beauty and plenteousness. At the same time that great and extraordinary force, military discipline, was called to give vigour and power to the defenders of Rhodes. Enthusiasm was kept alive in every bosom. The natives of the island and the citizens of Rhodes, though not belonging to the order, showed strongly by their ardour and pride in its defence, that the chivalrous character of its knights had extended its influence even to the hearts of the burgher and the peasant; adventurers and volunteers flocked in from every land, the soldiers of St. John were all courage and defiance; and the whole island looked for the coming of the Turks as a means of living honour or glorious martyrdom. Each officer, each soldier, each knight had his particular post assigned him, and seldom has the Christian world presented such a splendid display of gallant chivalry as thronged in arms upon the battlements of Rhodes.

In these arrangements Bertrand de la Croix was not forgotten; his cool but daring courage in all moments of danger had forced itself continually upon the observation of the grand master during the voyage from France; and there was also in his manner, however taciturn and grave, something which won regard—an undefinable charm, which, like the secret influence of some magic power, pleased and captivated without being seen or known. Villiers looked upon the young

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stranger with kindness, and relaxed the state of office and the sternness of command to win to confidence and intimacy; but Bertrand repelled every advance, and yet the grand master's affection, he knew not why, increased towards him instead of diminishing; and though he left him within the intrenchments which his silent reserve raised up around him, yet he did every thing consistent with his duty and his dignity to honour and to raise him.

To the fifty veteran soldiers who had first volunteered to serve under this young leader, the grand master added a band of a hundred adventurers who had taken service with the order, and in command of these Bertrand was assigned the defence of a part of the bastion of Auvergne, as it was called; for each part of the fortifications was intrusted to one of the several nations or languages of which the order was composed.

Still days and weeks passed and no enemy made his appearance; and Bertrand was constantly seen gazing from tower and turret and high ground over the seas; and every sail that he saw he watched long and anxiously, as it sometimes glided on calmly over the distant waves, sometimes grew upon the eye till it approached the shore and reached the port. In that case Bertrand was always at the ship's side among the first, listening eagerly to every detail of her passage, and, with frowning brow marking the many tales of Mussulman pirates that hovered round the island, and strove to master each vessel as it passed round the Sicilian coast and entered the Ionian seas.

To the knights of the order the young stranger soon became generally known; but the same silent reserve continued in his manner to all those whose age and pursuits seemed naturally to assimilate them with himself. A cold and somewhat haughty inclination of the head—a passing word, neither courteous nor rude, was all that he exchanged with any one, except with Sir Andrew de Merail, the chancellor of the order. To him, however, the manners of Bertrand de la Croix were very different; and whatever were

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the means he took to win the proud Castilian, they were at least successful, for De Merail was soon his frequent companion in his walks along the battlements, or in his rides over the high hills which commanded a view of the sea; and they would talk long and earnestly of far distant lands and scenes that seemed to be familiar to both, and some common anxiety appeared to be in the minds of each.

This was remarked and remembered afterward, and the knights of Rhodes were accustomed to observe, with a smile, how the two haughtiest men in the island had at once fallen into companionship together.

Though his countenance grew day by day more sad and anxious, the appearance of Bertrand de la Croix had in other respects assumed a gayer aspect than when first we spoke of him at Beaucaire. His apparel had gradually become splendid, his horses were the finest that could be procured. Servants and cavaliers were added to his train; and though he himself fared hardly, and lay upon a soldier's couch, yet ease and luxury pervaded his dwelling in the town of Rhodes, and many a young adventurer was glad to take service under him. Such as saw Bertrand de la Croix near, however, soon perceived that some deep and agitating care was busy at his mind. Each day, each hour it preyed upon him more and more; and even at night when sleep fell for a few troubled hours upon his eyelids, his slumber was disturbed and wretched, and the name of Isabel would break often from his unconscious lips.

In the mean while the mind of the grand master was wholly occupied with the defence of the capital. The triple enclosure of fortifications by which it was surrounded, the castle of St. Angelo, that of St. Elmo, the great tower of the Duke of Burgundy called the Tower of St. Nicolas, the thirteen old towers which flanked the second wall, had each their respective garrisons. Each of the ramparts also was defended, as I have said, by the nation whose name it bore; and a reserve was formed, divided into four bands, which

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were called companies of succour, under four of the most distinguished knights of the order, of whom the chancellor De Merail was one.

At length a multitude of fires upon the Lycian mountains gave notice that some great movement was taking place among the infidels; and after waiting for a few days in anxious expectations, the dawn of morning showed to the knights of Rhodes the whole sea covered with innumerable ships, bearing the enemy to their coasts. Each man in Rhodes was prepared to do his duty—to conquer or to die: but it must not be dissembled, that when first the cry was heard—"A fleet! A fleet!"—and the fatal crescent was seen glittering upon the air, many a heart, even of the bravest, beat with new and awful feelings, and a deep silence fell upon the armed city after the first rush of many feet had carried the multitude to the walls. They gazed upon the coming foe with the still quietness of strong expectation, watched all his manœuvres, counted the continual sails, measured with keen eyes the size of every vessel; and then reasoned, each with his fellow, on the enemy's number and their strength.

Four hundred ships, of different sizes, anchored within sight of Rhodes, and during the fifteen days which followed near two hundred thousand men were disembarked upon the island. The scattered report of artillery from some of the small forts erected to defend the coast was all that announced to the inhabitants of the town itself that the enemy was multiplying on their shores; for though the fleet continued still in sight, the bay in which the landing took place was hidden from the view by the high ground around. The reconnoitring parties, however, also brought in news from time to time, and then the advanced posts of the Christians were seen retreating towards the town, while here and there upon the heights appeared the gay and fluttering dresses of the Turkish horsemen. At length, thick and cloudy, the dust rose above the hill, and the wind brought swells of wild and martial music to the very battlements of Rhodes. Troop

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after troop of infidel cavalry, mounted on horses like the wind, gathered upon the plains, and long files of infantry advanced slowly, lining the edge of the prospect, and bristling the rise with pikes. In the morning the eye might have run over the whole view without seeing one living thing move through the extent of miles; and at evening, wherever the sight could reach was thronged with busy life. Myriads of dim forms might be perceived in every direction, and a roar like the distant voice of the sea came faintly upon the ear till night fell, and all was silence.

A space of nearly three miles still lay between the city and the besieging force; and, though a gun or two had been fired upon the parties which advanced far into the plain, the first day passed without any serious effort on either side.

The next day, however, the trenches were opened, and every hour saw them advance. They were pushed within cannon-shot, a battery was erected, and its guns began to play upon the walls; but the tremendous fire which was opened from the artillery of the place soon silenced the battery and swept the plain. The whole of every day a continual cannonade was kept up from the walls, mowing down like grass before the scythe every thing that appeared; and during the night, even the dark lines of walls and angles, and towers and battlements wrapped in the deep obscurity, through which the eye could scarcely trace their heavy masses, would suddenly become illuminated by a bright line of fire that, running from gun to gun, garlanded with fitful caprice the frowning brow of the fortress, and displayed its grim features with a sudden blaze, which was as speedily extinguished. Still, however, the Moslems pushed their approaches, and still by a thousand vigorous sallies the knights of St. John impeded their advance. Death in a multitude of fearful shapes awaited each infidel that ventured into the plain, and never did chivalry achieve nobler feats than before the walls of Rhodes. In every sally, in every bold attempt Bertrand de la Croix was foremost and most keen.

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Night after night he lay upon the ramparts, and day after day he went forth at the head of his followers, and returned red with the blood of the foe. The eyes of all men gradually fixed upon him, for wherever Bertrand de la Croix was seen there was the place of danger and of honour—there the thickest of the fight. The Moslems scattered from his arm like the dust of the desert before the siroc, and the Christians followed where he led, like darkness on the path of the lightning. Days and weeks wore by, and though supported by forty-fold the number of the Christians, the Turks made no impression on the walls of Rhodes; and as every evening closed in, some new tale of the young adventurer's daring was added to those which had gone before.

If praise and honour, however, were universally given to him, the companion of all his vacant hours, Sir Andrew de Merail, was looked upon with some degree of cold dislike. No one doubted the courage of the chancellor of the order, who, for eighteen years of his life which he had devoted to its cause, had shown a fearless valour, unsurpassed by any of its members; but certain it was that in the present war none of his former activity appeared. He avoided not danger, it is true; he stood calm and unmoved in the midst of the thickest fire: he seemed to forget the possibility of personal fear: but still there was no longer any of that eager energy in his demeanour which had raised him in the eyes of all to the glorious place of one of the most distinguished knights of St. John. His present indifference was easily accounted for; and the whole order had long perceived that the elevation of another to the dignity of grand master, when he had fancied his own election sure, had given his vanity a wound which nothing could heal, and that thenceforward Andrew de Merail was but a lukewarm member of their chivalrous brotherhood.

The whole talents of each individual, however, was necessary to the very salvation of the order, and the grand master tried by every demonstration of kindness and favour to win De Merail back to the display of all

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his vigour and activity. He praised, he consulted, he even courted him; and on one occasion he proposed himself the alliance which he had formerly declined, of his nephew, the Duke of Nivelle, with a daughter whom De Merail, when he took the cross of St. John, had left behind him in Spain. The chancellor replied but vaguely, but at the same time there was a bitter and cynical smile upon his lip which augured not favourably for the grand master's offer. His efforts, however, in favour of the order seemed occasionally to revive, and such was the fiery and chivalrous defence which the knights opposed to the Ottoman arms, that murmurs, discontent, and despondency spread through the Turkish army, and the fate of Rhodes seemed assured by the gallantry of her noble masters. At this crisis, however, arrived the Sultan Soliman himself, at that time in the meridian of his power and glory. With him, too, was the famous corsair, Courtogli; and the spirits of the Moslem rose under the eye of their king and the conduct of their daring countryman, to a pitch of ardour and enthusiasm which required all the fortitude and resolution of the Christians to resist.

The approaches were now once more pushed forward with incessant activity; batteries were raised and sustained; two enormous cavaliers were erected, dominecring the bastions of Auvergne and Italy. The tower of St. John, from which the Christians had discovered and frustrated the former measures of the Turks, was beaten down with cannon-shot; and it seemed, as if by some preternatural intelligence, the infidels obtained information of all the weak points of the fortress, and of the designs of its defenders. At the same time the progress of the Turkish works was covered by such immense bodies of troops, that the grand master was obliged to forbid the sallies of the knights and soldiers of the order on account of the immense and overwhelming multitude of their enemies. The volunteers, however, were still permitted to follow the dictates of their own courage; and hardly a day passed over but Bertrand de la Croix surprised the foe, and won new honour by some bold and politic exploit.

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The praises he received, however, and the deference with which he was treated, seemed to fall upon his heart like rain upon the sand of the desert, leaving not a trace of its having been. In the moment of danger and of strife the soul would beam up and flash forth in living fire from his dark eye; his glance would become full of energy and command, and a few brief words, instinct with the *prestige* of victory and the consciousness of power, would rouse his followers to deeds of almost insane daring, and lead them forward to the very cannon's mouth. At other times he was still cold and sad; and wandering round the bastions, he would sometimes gaze long and wistfully upon the melancholy sea, and then, with a mournful sigh, turn away; or, calmly placing himself in the midst of the enemy's fire, would watch their movements and plan some feat to counteract their designs.

One day, after standing long on the bastion of Italy, against which the whole cannon of the enemy were pointed, he turned and walked on, musing, to another part of the ramparts, which, unattacked, had been left nearly solitary. As he proceeded he saw an arrow, shot from one of the angles before him, fall into the Turkish lines, and a Moslem suddenly pick it up and carry it quickly away. The young soldier hastened forward towards the spot from whence it had been winged; for, notwithstanding the rapidity of its flight, he felt sure that he had seen a small white packet attached to the head as it fell; but on turning the angle of the wall he found no one but the Chancellor de Merail, and a slave holding a bow. So high an officer of the order and so brave a soldier was above suspicion; but still the matter was strange, and Bertrand de la Croix passed on musing. His curiosity was excited; yet, nevertheless, he felt bound by the laws of courtesy to inquire no further, and some ill-defined doubt made him mention what he had observed to no one. De Merail had remarked him pass, and from that moment his regard and attachment towards the young soldier seemed a thousand-fold increased, and all his own energies were henceforth signally exerted in defence of the order.

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Indeed, every effort had now become necessary. The enemy had rendered themselves masters of a part of the Italian post, and the sap and the mine were going on at once with great alacrity. The English and the Spanish boulevards also were attacked; fresh troops came over daily from the Lycian continent to the aid of the infidels, and continual, persevering, unremitted assaults wore and wasted the small host of defenders. At length more than one terrific breach appeared in the walls, and notwithstanding all the activity of Villiers de l'Isle Adam and his brave associates, the tremendous fire of the Turkish artillery prevented the reconstruction of the defences. During the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth of September this unceasing cannonade seemed to announce that some great and general assault was about to take place on the part of the Moslem; and during the morning of the thirtieth it was continued with terrible effect. Various movements also were seen in the Turkish army, and a great part of their force was drawn out in array, while a number of reconnoitring parties advanced and examined the state of the fortifications, notwithstanding an incessant shower of shot which poured from the cannon of the place.

But suddenly the fire of the Turks began to relax, their troops retired within the lines, and though the Christians remained in arms during the whole day, it became the general opinion, towards night, that the infidels had completely abandoned their design. The knights in general pressed the grand master to suffer all such troops as were not absolutely necessary to retire from the ramparts; and on his evincing some hesitation, De Merail observed, with a sneer, "that their commander wished to harden his troops like steel; and that, having heated them red-hot in the sun of a whole September day in the island of Rhodes, he was now going to cool them in the dews of a whole September night."

Still the grand master remained firm; and it was not till he had again and again examined, with careful accuracy, the distant encampment of the enemy, that he

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suffered a part of his weary soldiers to retire from the shattered walls and seek a few hours' repose. He himself knew none, but instantly proceeding to the citadel, he called six of his principal knights to council, and remained in long and secret debate. Bertrand de la Croix wrapped himself in his mantle, and casting himself down upon the bastion of Auvergne, where a large mass of stone threw a broad shadow in the midst of the yellow glare of moonlight, he closed his eyes, and seemed to sleep, but his mental vision rested still upon the wide and greedy sea, and many a gloomy phantom rose up before imagination, and drove hope, and peace, and slumber far away.

CHAPTER IV.

> To me the cries of fighting fields are charms,
> Keen be my sabre, and of proof my arms,
> I ask no other blessing of my stars.
>
> DRYDEN.

THE sky, and the air, and the earth were all calm as infancy, and the brightness of the midnight moon, mingling with a soft white autumn haze which filled up all the hollows, wrapped the scene in a dim uncertain splendour, more difficult for the eye to penetrate than darkness itself. A slight distant murmuring rush, like the roll of slow waves over a pebbly shore, fell upon the ear of Bertrand de la Croix as he lay upon the bastion, and starting upon his feet he gazed over the space between the armed walls and the lines of the infidel. Nothing, however, could he descry, and putting his hand to his ear, he listened; but for a moment the eager pulsations of his own quick heart was all he heard; and he doubted.—An instant after, the same rushing sound rose more clear upon the air—yet it might be the river—it might be a change of the wind which brought

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the roaring of the sea along the shore: but suddenly the quick wild neigh of a war-horse mingled with the sound, and Bertrand, raising his horn to his lips, blew a long and loud alarm—

"To the walls! to the walls! The enemy! the enemy! Alerte! alerte! To the walls!" he shouted, and instantly the cry was echoed from voice to voice, from wall to wall, from house to house. Knights, and soldiers, and citizens hastened forward; the couch was quitted in an instant, the armour buckled on, and forth to her ruined battlements Rhodes poured her armed children, while a thousand torches flashed along the streets, and withered the pale moonlight with their angry glare. But still was heard the rushing sound of the coming enemy, and soon, through the wreaths of the dewy mist, dark masses were seen moving onward, divested of all form and measure by the shadows of the night. Instantly, however, as the first trace of their line became discernible, a blaze of fire flashed over the walls of the city, and a thousand mouths of flame hurled death into their ranks. Then came a momentary pause, and then again the cannon opened upon the enemy, who were still seen rushing forward in the blaze; but at that moment a roar more loud than that of all the cannon of the place, simultaneous, with a broad, red, sudden glare of intense light, rushed up from the bastion of Italy, while a thousand dark masses hurled into the air were seen mingled with the bright blaze, like the stones cast up by the first outbreak of a volcano.

The remnants of the shattered wall were still rolling and tottering after the explosion of the mine, when the janizaries rushed up through the breach in thousands, their dark countenances gleaming one behind the other in the light of the torches and of the fires on the ramparts, which shone red and strong on the forms of the first line, and faded gradually away amid a sea of grim features and turbaned heads behind. On the walls too, and in the breach, the fierce blaze lighted up the armour of the knights, and the morions and *rondaches* of the soldiers; and while levelled lances, swords, bucklers,

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casques, and axes filled up in an instant the wide gap the explosion had left, a thousand hands from the crenelles and battlements around hurled down stones, and boiling oil, and flaming tar upon the heads of the assailants. Scream, and shout, and clang, and roar rushed up fearfully from the bitter struggle of the earth to God's calm sky. Troop after troop of the infidels forced their way up into the breach, and every turbaned head was met by a waving blade, or hurled down by some impetuous lance; but still fresh forces thronged to the assault, and foot to foot, and man to man, and steel to steel they fought, sometimes kept at arm's length by the pike or sword, sometimes clasped together in close and deadly struggle, where the dagger and the knife ended all.

For near an hour Bertrand de la Croix had stood the foremost on a shattered mass of the wall, dealing death to every Moslem that came within the sweep of his rapid and untiring arm. A hundred shots from below had passed close to his head; a hundred swords had waved around him; thrice had some of the more daring Moslems singled him out, and rushing upon him with the spring of a tiger, had endeavoured to reach his fearless heart with the dagger, and thrice by a single blow, dealt with the quick precision of the lightning, had they been cast lifeless into the fosse beneath. At length the grand master himself stood by his side.

"Bertrand," he said, in a rapid voice, "you have out done yourself: but quick, speed to the bastion of Auvergne; I see all the knights who should have been there to defend it have crowded hither. Your men, there, upon the rampart, are pouring down fire on the enemy: call part away to aid you, and should you find danger, send to me, and I will come to your support; but, above all things, speed! speed!"

Using the broken masses of the wall for steps, Bertrand was in a moment upon the battlements above; there he staid but to choose twenty of his bravest men, and then hurried with a foot of light towards the bastion of Auvergne. Every step that he took the wall became

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more solitary; all the defenders had hurried to the principal point of attack, and only here and there a simple sentinel stood looking towards the spot where his friends and fellow-christians were struggling with the enemy. Such was the case upon the bastion of Auvergne; but the young soldier found that a still more lamentable fault had been committed on the Spanish side, where not only the knights had quitted their post to hurry to the fight, but the sentinels themselves were all employed in wheeling some cannon to an outwork, to point them against the stream of enemies that were still pouring up towards the great breach. Bertrand instantly commanded them to desist, and return to their post; but before they had time to take ten steps towards the spot, a loud shout burst from the Spanish bastion, and the crescent of Mahomet was seen planted by the watch-fire, while the forms of the janissaries were beheld scattering themselves over the platform, and gathering materials for effecting a lodgment and defending their conquest.

The mind of Bertrand de la Croix instantly saw the only chance of recovery. "Fly to the grand master," he cried to one of his followers; "tell him what has happened! You of the bastion D'Auvergne, turn all your cannon on the Spanish platform, and cease not firing for a moment till you see this standard on the wall. Let the men in the traverse sweep the foot of the wall with their guns, so that no new reinforcement overpower us. And now, my brave comrades, once more, Death to the infidels! Success! Victory! and good St. John!"

Thus saying, he turned from the wall, led his scanty band round behind the works, and while the artillery of the bastion of Auvergne played with terrific effect upon the Turks in the post of Spain, Bertrand penetrated by the casemate into the bastion, and with the white cross standard in one hand, and his sword in the other, reached the top of the platform, cast himself into the midst of the Turks, already broken and scattered by the fire, and after a severe struggle drove them once more through the breach. At the same moment he beheld

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the rest of the infidel army retreating from the attack, and heard the general signals of recall; and now certain that the town was saved, he determined upon pursuing the fugitives. Without giving them a moment's pause, he followed them through the breach, hung upon their flank in the darkness, and urged their retreat into precipitate flight. Carried away, however, by the eager fire of his heart, he forgot the time and the distance, and followed the flyers almost to the Turkish camp; but the sight of the watch-fires and the lamps round some of the principal tents, within a few hundred yards, recalled him to himself, and he turned with his followers to find his way back to the city. They could plainly distinguish its dark walls, from which, every now and then, the flash of the cannon still continued; but Bertrand found himself embarrassed in the Turkish lines, though the trench near him seemed to have been the part of some approach which had been found useless, and in consequence was abandoned. While he considered its direction and calculated whither it led, he heard the tramp of armed men, and caught a faint glimpse of a strong body retreating from the city to the camp. Silent and speedily he descended with his men into the trench, and hastened back towards Rhodes. The body of janizaries he had seen passed him within a hundred yards, but without discovering him; and he marched for the city. The trench was evidently no longer used, and along all its angles and turnings Bertrand pursued his way undisturbed till he had nearly reached the town, where he encountered a small body of stragglers, who after a slight struggle dispersed in all directions, and sought safety in flight. The path now led directly to the Spanish bastion; but that spot which had been so neglected during the attack was now all bustling with soldiers, and the first reply to Bertrand's voice, as he shouted from below, was a cannon-shot. It boomed over the heads of his little band, however, without doing injury to any one, and he was soon recognised and admitted.

He found all the knights and officers, though wearied

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and exhausted, full of the events of the night; but there seemed also some other subject which occupied them deeply, for he remarked several knots gathered together speaking low and eagerly; but as he had hitherto entertained little communication with any one, they suffered him to pass on without making him a sharer in their discussion. At length one of those men who cannot resist bestowing a part of the few ideas they gain upon every one they meet, demanded if he had heard that Sir Andrew de Merail, the chancellor of the order, had been arrested and confined in the tower of St. Nicolas for treasonable practices with the enemy?

"Impossible!" exclaimed Bertrand, starting back with a degree of emotion no one had seen him evinced before,—"impossible! utterly impossible!"

"True, nevertheless," dryly observed an old knight who stood near; and Bertrand, seeing the eyes of many around fixed upon himself, regained at once his cold composure, and with somewhat like scorn upon his lip, retired, leaving them to comment as they chose.

CHAPTER V.

> Waste then, and lose no time,
> The business must be enterprised this night.
>
> DRYDEN.

THE young soldier strode home to his dwelling in the lower town, wearied in body and depressed in mind. "A traitor!" he thought, "De Merail a traitor!—Was it possible?—One who had so often shed his blood for the order of St. John—one who had ever shown himself a true knight though a haughty man!—And yet the arrow and the packet he had seen shot into the Turkish lines!—The common report among the knights that De Merail had said, on the failure of his own hopes of election, that Villiers de l'Isle Adam should be the last

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Grand Master of Rhodes!—his slackness in the defence!—his pernicious counsels!"—all rushed upon the mind of the young knight, and though he would have given a world to believe De Merail innocent, he could not himself but doubt. He suffered his page to unclasp his armour and to bathe some slight wounds which he had received, and then casting himself down, he strove for sleep till morning.

He rose almost with the dawn and sought the palace of the grand master, but Villiers was deep in council and might not be disturbed. He then joined some of the knights of Castile, to which language De Merail belonged; but all he could hear of him was, that two knights grand crosses, together with the ordinary judges, were ordered to sit that very day upon his trial. Those who affected friendship for him shook the head in silence, and those whom his pride had offended boldly called him a traitor. Still Bertrand de la Croix resolved to see the grand master himself, and watching his moment when he visited the ramparts, he boldly approached him in behalf of the unfortunate man, who had so lately fallen from one of the highest and noblest grades of the order, to imprisonment and disgrace. But the moment his name was mentioned Villiers de l'Isle Adam sternly waved his hand.

"Sir Bertrand de la Croix," he said, "stain not the honourable name you have acquired by deeds of unequalled courage in defence of Rhodes, by saying one word in favour of a convicted traitor. His peers and his judges have condemned him on evidence of his guilt, conclusive beyond all doubt, and to-morrow, as I live, he dies by the hand of the executioner. Answer not, sir; you are a gallant man, and we thank you for your services, but you have no voice in Rhodes!"

Bertrand's eye met that of the grand master with a glance of proud dignity equal to his own. "I come not, sir," he said, "to speak for the guilty or the condemned: but not knowing that his trial had so quickly taken place, I came to remind you, Sir Villiers de l'Isle Adam, that he was your opponent at your election, and

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to bid you see that free and fair justice was done him, as you would hold your good name throughout the world. This, sir, I came to tell you as gentleman to gentleman and knight to knight: and now, sir, I bid you farewell."

"Hold!" cried the grand master, as Bertrand turned away. "You speak, sir, somewhat too boldly, and yet your words touch upon painful truths. I feel—I know that the execution of Andrew de Merail may, in the world, be attributed to me as an unworthy vengeance. But I *have* done and *will* do justice to him and to all. He has been examined, tried, and judged by two noble and upright knights, who voted in his favour against my own election. It has been proved that he first called the infidel to our shores, and that he it has been who has betrayed all our secrets to the enemy. After patient investigation he has been condemned to death, and were he my dearest friend, my nearest kin, he should suffer the award.—Now, sir, to *you* farewell: I have wasted more words than benefits me."

Each turned upon his path, and Bertrand de la Croix, seeking his own dwelling, gave himself up to bitter meditation. "Isabel!" muttered he, "Isabel! How will her heart be wrung! Yet, why need I think of her? Her father's fate will never reach her ears. Either those greedy and insatiate waves have reckoned my lost jewel among all the fair bright things they have entombed, or else some cursed pirate—but I will not—I dare not think of that;" and Bertrand covered his eyes with his hands and groaned in agony of spirit.

The hours passed by, and the dark edge of the horizon hid the last beaming spot of the setting sun, when the page of Sir Andrew de Merail stood before Bertrand de la Croix after carefully closing the door and drawing down the tapestry. "Well, boy, what news?" exclaimed the young soldier. "Bring you letter or message from your lord?—Quick!—Speak!"

"No letter have I, sir," answered the boy; "nor have I message but to bid you speedily to him in the prison. Take this friar's gown and this chaplet. Sir

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Knight! The jailer is bribed, and the doors will open to you—and hasten to him, for life and death are upon your steps."

Bertrand paused for a moment, and thought—"It matters not!" cried he, at length; "it matters not!" and taking the gown and chaplet he drew the hood over his face, and strode onwards towards the sea, into which the tower of St. Nicolas, where De Merail was confined, projected on a sort of natural mole. No sentinel challenged him till he came near the tower, but there he was obliged to give the word at each post. His knowledge of the countersign, however, served him till he had entered the tower, and there inquiring in a feigned voice for the civil officer, in whose custody the prisoners were lodged, he found that his way had already been prepared by weighty bribes. He was instantly conducted into a small room, where the jailer made him uncover his head to satisfy himself of his identity. That being done, he led him through the long dim passages of the tower, whose melancholy gloom was heightened by the roaring of the sea, as it dashed against its base.

All passed in silence, and the only words exchanged were, when opening a strong door the officer bade him enter, whispering "Be quick."—"I will," replied the young soldier, and he passed into the cell. A table, a chair, a bed, and a lamp were all the moveables it contained, and in the midst stood Andrew de Merail, with a thousand deep channels and lines in his brow and cheek, wrought by the passing of a single dreadful day. His eye was still, however, full of fire and light, and his brow was lit with stern determination; but the stiff curls of his gray hair seemed to have relaxed their bend, and hung wildly over his brow and cheek, and there was a quivering eagerness about his lip, which spoke the restless and perturbed soul within.

"You have come!" cried he, as Bertrand entered, and the jailer closed the door behind him. "You have come! I thought you would—this is no moment for fears or hesitation!—But mark me, sir—I sent not for

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you on my own account!—No!—they might have torn my old limbs with red-hot pincers, ere I would have claimed aid of mortal man. But my daughter—*my* Isabel—*your* Isabel—our beloved, must be saved."

"Ha!" exclaimed Bertrand, in the same rapid, almost incoherent manner; "have you heard of her? Where is she? How can she be succoured?—Speak, my lord!—speak!"

"Only by one earthly means," replied De Merail. "Till my child was involved, whatever were my plans, I sought no earthly aid; content, if I rose, to triumph singly, and if I fell, to fall alone. But now, sir, you must aid me, and if your heart quail or hesitate but as a strong lance trembles to a light wind, you are false and faithless to your love, and give her tamely to the polluting arms of a base infidel. Look you—you read the lingua franca,—construe me that," and he drew from his bosom a roll of paper, which he placed in the hand of his companion. Bertrand approached the light and read.

THE LETTER.

"Peri Bacha of Patras to De Merail, one of the chiefs of the Corsairs of Rhodes.

"The high and mighty Sultaun Solimaun, Emperor of the World, wills me to tell thee, oh! faithless Giaour, that doubting the truth and honesty of thy counsels, which have as yet proved only fatal and detrimental to the armies of the Prophet, he has found a means to ensure thy sincerity, or to punish thee in its default. Know then, oh son of a perverted race! that a Frankish girl has been taken by Courtogli, the faithful servant of the sublime sultaun, who, declaring herself thy daughter, has been kept as a pledge and hostage of thy faith. If, according to thy treaty, thou dost deliver into the hands of the servants of the prophet this stronghold of Christian robbers, the sovereignty of Cyprus shall be secured unto thee, according to the un

broken word of the monarch of the monarchs of the earth; and the maiden thy daughter shall be restored to thy arms pure and uninjured as she left thee. But if thou failest in that which I am about to prescribe to thee, she shall become the slave of the lowest groom of the sultaun's stables, and when Rhodes shall have fallen, thou thyself shalt be torn to pieces by wild horses. Know, then, that to-morrow night the armies of the Prophet will once more march to the storm: two hours after the evening prayer a false attack will be made upon the bastion which the Giaours call that of Italy, but the real one will be against that of Auvergne. See that not a gun be fired from that bastion, for thy daughter's tent is within reach of its fire; and see also, that when the soldiers of the Prophet plant his standard upon the post of Auvergne, not a Giaour be found in arms upon that point, and that thou art ready to aid the servants of the Most High. Do this and thou shalt live."

As Bertrand de la Croix read, the eye of the unhappy De Merail fixed upon his countenance with intense and agonizing scrutiny. The muscles of his face were drawn and tense, and his strong marked features were sharpened and almost distorted with the world of busy passions that were thronging at his heart: but when the young soldier had finished, and he saw the proud stern scorn that gathered in his eye, rage took the place of fear and expectation, and with threats and imprecations he sought to drive him to his purpose.

"Was he the lover," he asked, "who would sacrifice life and all that life was worth for her he loved—yes, he who dared risk nothing?"

And then again he menaced him with accusations before the council of the order, and threatened to charge him with participation in his own crimes. Wildly and volubly he poured forth a torrent of mingled argument, intimidation, inducement, and supplication. But Bertrand de la Croix listened with firm, unshaken mind.

"Unhappy man," he said at length, "I would not be the thing you think me—no! not for a million empires

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I will save *your* child, *my* Isabel, or die: but stain my knighthood and betray my trust is what I never will do. Fare you well, and God have mercy on you!" and casting down the letter he turned to quit the cell.

The heart of De Merail was bowed to the earth. "Leave me not! leave me not!" he cried,—"stay, stay, oh stay!" and he laid his hand with an uncertain grasp upon the friar's robe that covered the young soldier. Bertrand turned for an instant with a glance of painful pity: De Merail relaxed his hold, covered his eyes with his hands, and exclaiming, "Oh God! oh God!" suffered him to depart.

When Bertrand issued forth from the tower of St. Nicolas, the whole earth was covered with deep darkness. The Moslems' hour of evening prayer was past, and the moment which was to bring the new attack and to seal the fate of her he loved far better than existence was hurrying on; but still he turned his steps to the palace of the grand master, and demanded earnestly to speak with him on business of life and death, but Villiers refused to see him, and Bertrand turned upon his path.

In a few minutes all his men were collected, and equipping himself in the lightest armour he could find, Bertrand prepared to leave the city by the sally-port of the post of Auvergne, indignantly leaving the grand master to meet the coming danger as best he might. But still as he was about to turn away he paused for a moment—

"No, no!" cried he at length; "he must be warned. Perchance he thought I came to plead for a guilty traitor. Get thee back, Dufarrel; go to the gate of the grand master's palace: besiege it closely; seek to speak with him, and leave it not at all events till you see him come forth. Tell him to look to the bastion of Auvergne, for that I have good reason to believe *there* will be the greatest struggle, wherever the Turks may feign their first attack; and if I return not before dawn to-morrow, give him this ring with your own hands, and tell him I am dead."

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The soldier refused not to obey, although he murmured somewhat about quitting his lord. He hurried quickly, however, to the grand master's palace, and twice sought to speak with him; but was twice refused admittance, as Villiers de l'Isle Adam was deeply busied in a council of the order. At length an outcry from the western side called his attention as he stood watching at the gate for the grand master's coming forth. Shouts and exclamations were heard, and the roar of artillery grew loud and frequent. Forgetting the orders he had received he rushed with all speed towards the scene of strife, but ere he had gone far his master's commands flashed across his memory, and he turned with the same haste to seek the palace gate again. Before he reached it, however, and panting and out of breath with the speed he had put forth to remedy his error, he suddenly encountered Villiers himself hurrying on foot towards the Italian ramparts, followed by a crowd of knights and soldiers.

The grand master mistook the object of his haste. "What! flying!" he exclaimed, striking him with his gauntlet. "Back to the ramparts, caitiff! for by heaven, if thou fightest not like a man thou shalt die like a dog. Speak not! back, I say!" and again he struck him with his armed hand. The soldier glared upon him for a moment as if he would have smote him in return, and then turning suddenly round, he darted away, reached the bastion of Italy, and mingled in the fray.

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CHAPTER VI.

For I must love, and am resolved to try
My fate, or, failing in the adventure, die.
DRYDEN.

The moon was hidden in clouds, and not a star was to be seen in the heavens when Bertrand and his men glided forth from the sally-port of the post of Auvergne. Darkness spread all around them, and a few twinkling lamps in the Turkish camp was the only guide to their footsteps; but most of the party had crossed and recrossed that plain so often in the various sorties which had taken place, that scarce a step of the ground was unknown to them; and they advanced fearlessly, though cautiously, down the slope of the hill, till they reached a small clump of bushes and stunted trees about a quarter of a mile distant from the first tents of the Turkish encampment. No sallies had of late taken place on the part of the garrison, for their numbers were too small to risk unnecessary loss; and the infidels, except when urging some night attack, had slept in peace, so that, buried in perfect security, small precautions were taken against any efforts of the Christians.

So well had Bertrand chosen his way that not a sentinel had been met; but now he paused behind the bushes, for at no great distance lay a post of Turkish soldiers. At the same time he knew not whether the trench by which he had returned the night before, and which lay close beside him, might not form the line of advance for the Turkish troops upon the post of Auvergne; and he was determined to wait till a part at least had passed by before he attempted to execute the bold adventure on which he was bent. During this temporary halt he told his men the hazardous nature of the action before them, and finding all willing to fol-

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low him to death itself, he allotted them their several duties clearly and precisely, and then crouching with them under the bushes, waited for the passing of the Moslem storming parties.

It is needless to dwell long upon his thoughts during the few minutes he thus remained. Life and death, as far as he himself was concerned, and deliverance or degradation to her he loved, were the stakes for which he played his bold and fearful game: but the bitter memory of her father's treason and near-approaching fate hung heavy upon his mind, and mingled with many a painful thought for the future. But still the great excitement of his present enterprise occupied his first thoughts; and though, when the idea of De Merail's fate flashed across his mind, a chill and painful feeling would gather round his heart, yet his whole senses were alive to what was passing around, and not a leaf fell from the trees above him but was marked by his keen ear. As he lay the sound of a gradually gathering host was heard from the Turkish camp,—the whispered commands, the stealthy movements, the muffled arms; and then the measured but soft tread of men tutored to silence. A large body was evidently advancing, and they could be seen interposing as a dense mass between the spot where he lay and the lights in the Turkish camp. They came near—more near—skirted the very bushes, and passed on, file after file, towards the city. Another mass of many thousands might be just distinguished as they crossed some faint streaks of struggling light upon the edge of the horizon; but they too moved on, and then there was a pause. Bertrand lifted his head and listened, but instantly bent down again, while a third and larger body still poured on at a short distance. It was clear that on this great effort Soliman sent forth the whole of his multitude.

Silence succeeded, and then advancing gently to the trench which had not been occupied, Bertrand and his companions stole forward to the Turkish camp. As they advanced they could distinguish on a hill at half a mile's distance a sort of scaffolding with several

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torches round about it, together with a large body of cavalry, and on the scaffolding itself several human figures, apparently gazing towards the fortress. Between his party and the camp was a line of sentinels scattered at considerable distances, and the one nearest the extremity of the disused trench had been seduced away to speak with his companion at some distance. Just behind was a village of pioneers' huts, but they were all dark and deserted, and behind them were some lighted tents just within the range of the guns on the bastion of Auvergne, and Bertrand doubted not that there lay all that he valued in the world. The sentinel was evidently deep in conversation with his companion, and, one by one, Bertrand and two of his comrades stole across and hid themselves in the darkness of the pioneers' huts. As a fourth was going to pass, however, the sentinel turned back and resumed his post; but Bertrand knew that the soldier that was next to follow was bold and skilful, and well versed in the Turkish tongue, and he paused anxiously to see how he would accomplish his passage.

The sentinel turned slowly backwards and forwards for some time—then pausing to listen, he leaned upon his arquebuse; but at that moment with one spring the Christian soldier was upon him—his hand clasped upon his mouth, his foot upon the match of his gun, and his dagger in his heart. The slight rustle of a momentary struggle and a deep groan was all that was heard, and before the other sentinel had turned from the round he was making, the Christian soldier, with the turban of the dead man on his head, and his arquebuse on his shoulder, was slowly parading in a different direction, so as completely to deceive his eye, and make him think that his companion, having resumed his post, was not willing to risk any further conversation. Each time the Turkish sentry—whose post was about two hundred yards from the spot—turned in his walk, two or three of Bertrand's men passed across into the shadow of the huts; and when the whole were thus within the lines, he himself advanced cautiously towards

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the lighted tents, in one of which he doubted not that Isabel de Merail was confined. Keeping carefully in the shadow he advanced between two, and bending down his ear listened to some voices that were speaking within; but the language employed was Turkish, and the tone not that of her he loved. Still he listened for a moment longer, when from the other tent on his left he could hear a noise as of a dog running quickly round the inside of the canvass walls, and with a low sort of whine of pleasure seeming to recognise him, and to welcome his approach.

"What ails thee, Querida? What ails thee?" cried the voice of Isabel, a moment after. "Alas! alas! He that thou wert wont so to greet in other days is no longer near."

Bertrand beckoned forward his followers, and bade them be prepared to second him in a moment, if he found any one in the inner tent besides Isabel herself. Some one was beyond all doubt on guard in the outer tent, but he effected a shorter means of entrance for himself by drawing his dagger, and at once ripping the canvass down to the ground. The hangings with which it was lined were easily removed, and Bertrand stood within the tent. Isabel was alone, and the instant she saw him, she sprang forward to his arms with a faint cry of delight.—Some one moved in the outer tent, and conscious that their safety greatly depended on the secrecy of their escape, Bertrand drew back behind the hangings, and Isabel with instinctive quickness stooped to fondle her dog. At the same instant, the grim head of a eunuch was thrust in, but seeing nothing to excite suspicion was immediately withdrawn, and in a moment after Isabel was in the free air by her lover's side. No words were spoken; all was comprehended at once; but Bertrand hurried forward to the spot where his follower still kept guard, to all appearance a Turkish sentinel, and there bore Isabel across the open space in his arms to the mouth of the deserted trench. The other sentinel had extended his parade farther than usual; all the followers of the young

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Christian passed unobserved, and thus, as will some times happen, one of the most bold and hazardous attempts that the mind of man could conceive was executed without difficulty, and with no singular event in its course.

In the deep darkness which still continued, Bertrand hastened with her he loved, fixing his eyes upon the dim lines of the city, which were scarcely to be distinguished from the deep obscurity of the sky. Suddenly there was a quick flash upon the Italian bastion, and then came the report of a single cannon. The moment after, the whole walls were in a blaze, and the stillness of the night was swallowed up in the roar of artillery. On! on! Bertrand sped, sometimes leading Isabel by the hand, sometimes carrying her in his arms, as the ground permitted; but still hoping to reach the bastion of Auvergne before the false attack upon the post of Italy had been abandoned, and the real one commenced on the other point. The balls of the cannon sang over their heads as they advanced, and sometimes striking the ground near them, dashed a shower of sand into the trench, while each minute the roar of the artillery became louder, the shouts and cries of the combatants mingled with the sound; and through the clouds of smoke that began to envelop them the flaming mouths of the cannons might be seen, pouring death and destruction on the very path they were pursuing.

Isabel trembled in every limb, and for her the stout heart of Bertrand felt sensations he had never experienced for himself. Nearer, more near they came, and for a moment turned from the thick of the fire, and approached the bastion of Auvergne. The ramparts at that point were but thinly manned, and Bertrand, carrying Isabel in his arms, shouted loud to the soldiers to give him entrance.

He was soon recognised, and some movements were made to admit him; but at that moment a large body of the Turkish infantry wheeled upon the spot where he was standing. Not a moment was to be lost. The

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janizaries were advancing with the speed of lightning to the attack of the bastion;—every instant brought them nearer:—the warder at the sally-port was fearful and unsteady; and seeing no other way of escape, Bertrand rushed up over the ruins of the breach which the Turkish artillery had effected during the day, while a tremendous discharge of shot and arrows took place around him. Agitation, fatigue, and terror now completely overwhelmed the unfortunate girl he carried in his arms. The flash and the roar of the cannon, the shouts, the cries, the yells, the strange fierce faces and armed forms she had seen around her on every side, all in a moment faded before her mind, and she fainted away in the arms of her lover. Staggering up over the unsteady ruins of the wall, Bertrand struggled on, but towards the top a large stone gave way, and nearly cast him back to the ground. At the same time a strong soldier, who knew him, held down his arms from above to reach the beautiful, but apparently lifeless form he carried. The Turks were close behind his steps—each moment hazarded her life, and Bertrand intrusted Isabel to the hands of the honest soldier, exclaiming—"Quick to my house! I will take your place." The man, stooping far over, received her in his arms as a father would his infant, and bore her instantly from that scene of bloodshed and death. In the mean while Bertrand again endeavoured to climb the last few steps, but there the stones were looser than below; and as he rushed on, losing nearly as much ground as he gained, the Turks also began to climb the breach. Bertrand saw that they would reach him before he could arrive at the top, and was about to form his men as best he could even where they stood; but at that moment the grand master, perceiving the real direction the Turkish attack had now taken, hastened to the bastion D'Auvergne.

As he sprang forward towards the breach, followed by all the knights and soldiers he could collect, the first object his eye fell upon was Bertrand de la Orbin, leading on—as it appeared—the Turkish soldiers to the

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assault. Where he stood, the short space between the young soldier and the Turks was nearly lost to his sight; the knights who accompanied the grand master were deceived like himself, and crying out upon the imagined treason, they threw themselves into the breach.

Bertrand gladly beheld them coming, as he thought, to his assistance, but, to his surprise, he was in a moment struck to the ground, seized, and disarmed; and while shoulder to shoulder, and shield clasped to shield, the knights of St. John opposed to the Turks the same dauntless, unconquerable front with which they had met all former attacks, one of their most gallant supporters was carried bound and bleeding to the criminal prison in the tower of St. Nicolas.

CHAPTER VII.

Peace, good reader! do not weep—
Peace! the lovers are asleep:
They, sweet turtles, folded lie
In the last knot that love could tie.
Let them sleep!—let them sleep on,
Till this stormy night be gone,
And the eternal morrow dawn;
Then the curtains shall be drawn;
And they waken with that light,
Whose day shall never sleep in night.

CRASHAW.

The fight had passed by, the attack of the Turks was again repulsed, and morning had taken the place of night, when Bertrand de la Croix was led, bound and guarded, from the prison in which he had spent the last eight hours to the palace of the grand master. As he passed through the great square, he was met by four men carrying a dead body covered with a cloth, and a little farther on he beheld a scaffold, a block, and an axe, with bloody evidences around of their having been lately used for the purposes of death. At the same time, from the scattered groups of spectators, who were separating

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after the fatal scene they had witnessed, he heard frequently pronounced the name "De Merail," and the appellation of "hardened traitor."

Bertrand required no other comment, and without question suffered himself to be led on in silence. After arriving at the buildings which were called the inns of the order, he was detained for a few moments, and had an opportunity of observing the ravages which war had already made. More than one-half of the lodgings seemed vacant, and the groans of the dying and wounded knights brought home from the last assault rendered the hall but a melancholy resting-place. At length the door of the council-chamber was opened for him, and he was brought before the tribunal of the order.

At the end of a long table, in a seat a little raised above the rest, sat the grand master; his features worn and channeled with toil and anxiety, and his garments apparently unchanged since the combat of the preceding night. Several of the higher officers of the brotherhood were placed around him, and the rest of the table was filled with knights commanders and grand crosses. Bertrand placed himself at once opposite the chief of the military fraternity, and encountered his grave dark eye with a glance, firm, calm, and dignified as his own.

"It is a melancholy task, Sir Bertrand de la Croix," said the grand master, after a momentary pause, "to judge and sentence treachery and treason—things, we would fain believe, which could not exist with gallantry and courage. Nevertheless, in the case of the unhappy man who died this morning, we had proof that such a union of crimes and virtues may take place, and we have strong reason to believe that in you also we have an example of the same. Putting aside what we ourselves beheld, we have this morning examined various witnesses whose evidence seems conclusive of your guilt. Yet still, whatever you can bring forward in your own defence shall be listened to attentively, and have all due weight; for, God knows, we would willingly believe you innocent. The specific charge against you is, having leagued with the Turks, in concert with Andrew

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de Merail, once a knight of this order, and having communicated with the enemy, favoured his enterprises, and finally led him on to the attack last night, by which Rhodes has been more injured and her garrison more weakened than by the whole of the previous siege. The facts already proved against you are, that you were the constant friend and companion of the traitor De Merail —that you visited him disguised last night in prison, and in consequence of a letter from the Turkish commander, Peri, found upon his person, that you concerted with him the means of giving up the city to the Turks, by withdrawing your men from the bastion of Auvergne —that you went yourself to the Turkish camp; and that, in the certainty of success, you yourself, with the men you had brought to Rhodes, led on the infidel troops in their fatal attack of the very post to which you were attached. The witnesses are the page of the traitor Andrew de Merail, the jailer of the tower of St. Nicolas, two soldiers who opened for you the sally-port of the post of Auvergne, and five knights of St. John, who with ourselves witnessed the fact of your leading on the janizaries to the breach last night."

"Good faith, Sir Villiers de l'Isle Adam," replied the young soldier, "were the matter less than life and death it would make me smile to see how cunningly a chain of evidence may be woven against an innocent man. Frown not, sir! I charge you not with seeking the death of one who never injured you. I believe you to be a good knight and true if ever was: but still I beg you to remember what communication I ever held with the infidels since first I set my foot in Rhodes. That I have leagued with them I acknowledge, but it was as the tiger leagues with the wild bull, for mutual destruction. That I have communicated with them—true! but it has been with my sword-edge to their brows and my dagger in their hearts. They are my dear companions in arms!—are they not? Have you not, all of you, seen us mingle our hearts' blood together in trench and in the breach, and holding each other to our bosoms, let nothing part us but death. Fy, fy!

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ye knights of Rhodes, is it thus ye repay your soldiers? True, grand master, I did visit De Merail in prison, —true, I did read the letter from the Bacha Peri,—true, I did go to the Turkish camp, but with no friendly intent; and before I set my foot beyond the walls of Rhodes I came to warn you of your danger, if you would be warned, but you refused me your presence. Even then I sent one of my followers to seek you, to watch for you, and to tell you to guard the bastion of Auvergne, for there would be the true attack. Doubtless he did his duty, and why you repeat not now that fact I cannot tell. Last night, however, was not my night to watch the bastion of Auvergne, therefore I took not my men from their duty when I sallied out to the Turkish camp; nor did I go thither to league with enemies of the faith, but to save from their hands a lady and my love; and where is the knight who dares to say I did not right?"

Bertrand de la Croix now proceeded to give an exact detail of all that had occurred during the preceding night, and it was evident that the simple truth of the story had some effect. His manner was calm and dignified, although there was less of that cold haughtiness in it than he usually displayed; but still the brow of the grand master and of the elder knights retained their stern aspect, and after a brief consultation Villiers de l'Isle Adam replied,—

"Your story, sir, is plausible; but we have no proof, even though the deliverance of this captive lady might take place through your means, that you did not betray the city to the Turks as the means of gaining her. The fact of your having sought for me may have taken place—the fact of your having sent me warning or message never did. No such warning reached me. However, fearful of doing injustice, though resolved to punish where punishment is deserved, we give you two hours to seek through the whole town the messenger you despatched; choose from the knights of St. John any two in whom you may place confidence, and on their knighthood let them use every means

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within that time to produce any proof that you even attempted to warn the order of the danger you knew was about to befall it. Make your selection, and God speed their endeavours!"

"You, Sir John de Real, and you, Sir Oliver de Braissac," replied the prisoner, addressing two of the knights present, "if in your good courtesy you will so far trouble yourselves, I will beg you to seek for one Peter Dufarrel; first let him be inquired for among my own followers, and then through the town. Bring him before the council—let him be fairly questioned what were his lord's last commands before setting forth on his expedition last night. If he speak not as I have spoken, strike off my head!"

The knights willingly undertook the task. Bertrand was removed, and the bonds taken from his hands; but moment after moment passed and no tidings of comfort or consolation reached him. An hour went by and then another, and Bertrand was again led to the council-chamber of the order; the cloud had gathered deeper than before on the brow of the grand master.

"The knights you yourself chose," he said, in a slow and solemn voice, addressing the young soldier, "have searched town and castle in vain for the person you have named, and on their honour they cannot discover him; the council have heard your case and have patiently examined it all. Traitors must not be left unpunished, and it is, therefore, my painful duty to doom you to death, Sir Bertrand de la Croix!"

"Hold!" exclaimed the young soldier, in a firm, deep, powerful voice, in the clear steady tone of which no note of fear could be heard. "Hold, Villiers de l'Isle Adam! and call me not Bertrand de la Croix. Say, rather, Francis, Duke of Nivelle—yes, sir,—your nephew, and the chief of your own house! Now forward with your sentence—now that you know that the innocent blood you are about to shed is kindred to your own;" and placing his hat and plume upon his head he fixed his proud dark eye full upon the countenance of the grand master.

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A convulsive motion, springing from the agony of his heart, passed twice over the face of Villiers de l'Isle Adam; but still the struggle to do his duty and his high sense of impartial justice wrought powerfully against the bonds of kindred and affection. His clenched hand wrung the arm of the chair in which he sat, his features became drawn and haggard, his lip quivered, his eye strained upon the fine noble countenance of his nephew, and then, after several attempts, he staggered up from his seat and strove to speak. Words at first were wanting, but at length, with a dreadful effort, he repeated twice, "I doom you to death! I doom you to death!"

"Not so! not so!" cried several of the knights present. "Hold, my lord! hold!" But at that moment the door of the hall was forced open, and a pale ghastly man, covered with bloody bandages, rushed into the hall, followed by several surgeons of the hospital, who strove in vain to hold him.

"He is delirious," cried a surgeon; "let him not near the grand master!—he is delirious from a wound on his head, and raving about some ring."

But the wounded man strode on, noticing no one in the hall, and with a rapidity that permitted no interruption. He approached the grand master, cast himself at his feet, and holding up a ring, he exclaimed, "I am not mad, my lord! Last night, my noble master, the Duke of Nivelle, when sallying forth against the Turks, bade me warn you to look to the bastion of Auvergne. If he returned not before the dawn I was to give you this ring, and tell you that he is dead. You struck me last night and called me coward when I came to warn you as my lord commanded. Strike me again if you will—I am ready to die, for my lord is dead, and I have done his bidding!"

"God of Heaven!" cried the grand master. "Pardon me, a sinner!—my rash haste has caused me to strike an innocent man, and nearly hurried me on to spill the guiltless blood of my own brother's son."

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But few words now remain to be said and few explanations to be given. The faithful follower to whom the Duke of Nivelle had intrusted his message to the grand master, after having been driven, as we have seen, back to the ramparts, mingled in the thickest of the fight in order to shame the name of coward, with which he had been branded. He soon fell under several wounds, and was carried to the hospital of the order, where he raved wildly during the night of the grand master and the Duke of Nivelle, a name unknown in the town of Rhodes. In the morning he asked wildly if the duke had returned, and the surgeons fancying him delirious, replied in the negative. He then strove to rise, but was prevented for some hours, at the end of which, however, he watched his opportunity, forced his way out, and reached the presence of the grand master as detailed above.

The innocence of the young Duke of Nivelle was now fully established, and he easily explained to his uncle the circumstances which had led to the cold reserve and concealment he had adopted. Having met and loved Isabel de Merail in Spain, he had determined to win her by high deeds in favour of that order to which her father had devoted himself. But his own uncle, the grand master, having refused the alliance when pressed in former days, the young lover was afraid that his scheme would meet opposition and obstruction if he made himself known to his relation, from whose memory fifteen years had obliterated all traces of his person. Lest any casual circumstance should betray his secret also, he imposed upon himself a stern system of reserve, which he only broke through towards the father of her he loved; nor did he reveal himself to him till he had won his regard. De Merail, who had already bound himself to the Turks, gladly seized a fresh means of punishing, as he thought, the rival who had borne away the highest dignity of the order from the hand he stretched to grasp it, and willingly promised his daughter to the Duke of Nivelle, though he had at one time

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declared that fire and water should as soon unite as his race with that of Villiers de l'Isle Adam.

When many mutual explanations had been given between the grand master and his nephew, the mind of the gallant knight of Rhodes reverted to all the splendid deeds he had seen the young soldier perform in defence of the order, and clasping him to his bosom, he exclaimed, "How—how could I ever think you guilty? But tell me, tell me, Nivelle—for it weighs like a load upon my heart, that the same fatal errors which had nearly led to your death may have brought that wretched man De Merail to the block without cause; tell me, was his sentence just?"

"Be your heart at rest," replied the duke. "He well deserved his fate: but if I have served the order of Rhodes—if I have shed my blood in its defence, never let the manner of his death reach his daughter's ears. Let it be buried in silence and hid in the bosom of the order, for I would not for a world that my bride's cheek should burn with the knowledge that her father was a traitor."

Nor did she ever know it. Nivelle soon clasped her again to his bosom, and did away all her fears for his own safety. He had still, however, the hard task of breaking to her the loss of her parent, although his devotion to the order of St. John had long deprived her of his immediate care and near affection. To her dying-day she believed that he had fallen gallantly in the defence of Rhodes, and in after-years when that island was mentioned, though she thought of it with a sigh, there mingled with her sorrow a touch of that pride with which the knights themselves remembered their long, glorious resistance.

As all men know, Rhodes at length fell, but it was not till her bulwarks were levelled with the ground, and her defenders reduced to less than a hundredth part of the force that assailed them. Even then a proud capitulation gave glory both to the living and the dead; and sailing away from the island for which they had

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so nobly fought, the grand master and his knights anchored at Setia, in the island of Candia, where Isabel de Merail gave her hand to him who had so long possessed her heart. The morning of their affection broke in storms and tempests, but now, when once the clouds had passed away, the hours sped on in sunshine and tranquillity, and a bright calm evening closed the long summer-day of their existence.

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HADDAD-BEN-AHAB;

OR,

THE TRAVELLER.

A TALE OF STAMBOUL.

BY JOHN GALT.

"Gramercy, Sir Traveller, it marvels me how you can carry between one pair of shoulders the weight of your heavy wisdom. Alack, now!—would you but discourse me of the wonders you saw ayont the antipodes!

"Peace, ignoramimous!—'tis too good for thy ass's ears to listen to. The world shall get it, caxtonised in a great book."

The Traveller and the Simpleton.

Haddad-Ben-Ahab was a very wise man, and he had several friends men of discernment, and partakers of the wisdom of ages; but they were not all so wise as Haddad-Ben-Ahab. His sentences were short, but his knowledge was long, and what he predicted generally came to pass, for he did not pretend to the gift of prophecy. The utmost he ever said in that way was, that he expected the sun to rise to-morrow, and that old age was the shadow of youth.

Besides being of a grave temperament, Haddad-Ben-Ahab was inclined to obesity; he was kindly and good-natured to the whole human race; he even carried his benevolence to the inferior creation, and often patted his dogs on the head and gave them bones; but cats he could not abide. Had he been a rat he could not have regarded them with more antipathy; and yet Haddad-Ben-Ahab was an excellent man, who smoked

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his chibouque with occasional cups of coffee and sherbet, interspersed with profound aphorisms on the condition of man, and conjectures on the delights of paradise.

With his friends he passed many sunbright hours; and if much talk was not heard among them on these occasions, be it remembered that silence is often wisdom. The scene of their social resort was a little kiosk in front of one of the coffee-houses on the bank of the Tigris. No place in all Bagdad is so pleasantly situated. There the mighty river rolls in all the affluence of his waters, pure as the unclouded sky, and speckled with innumerable boats, while the rippling waves, tickled, as it were, by the summer breezes, gambol and sparkle around.

The kiosk was raised two steps from the ground; the interior was painted with all the most splendid colours. The roof was covered with tiles that glittered like the skin of the Arabian serpent, and was surmounted with a green dragon, which was painted of that imperial hue, because Haddad-Ben-Ahab was descended from the sacred progeny of Fatima, of whom green is the everlasting badge, as it is of nature. Time cannot change it, nor can it be impaired by the decrees of tyranny or of justice.

One beautiful day Haddad-Ben-Ahab and his friends had met in this kiosk of dreams, and were socially enjoying the fragrant smoke of their pipes, and listening to the refreshing undulations of the river, as the boats softly glided along—for the waters lay in glossy stillness—the winds were asleep—even the sunbeams seemed to rest in a slumber on all things. The smoke stood on the chimney-tops as if a tall visionary tree grew out of each; and the many-coloured cloths in the yard of Orooblis, the Armenian dier, hung unmolested by a breath. Orooblis himself was the only thing, in that soft and bright noon, which appeared on the land to be animated with any purpose.

Orooblis was preparing a boat to descend the Tigris, and his servants were loading it with bales of apparel and baskets of provisions, while he himself was in a

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great bustle, going often between his dwelling-house and the boat, talking loud and giving orders, and ever and anon wiping his forehead, for he was a man that delighted in having an ado.

Haddad-Ben-Ahab seeing Orooblis so active, looked at him for some time; and it so happened that all the friends at the same moment took their amber-headed pipes from their lips, and said—

"Where can Orooblis, the Armenian dier, be going?"

Such a simultaneous interjection naturally surprised them all, and Haddad-Ben-Ahab added—

"I should like to go with him, and see strange things, for I have never been out of the city of Bagdad, save once to pluck pomegranates in the garden of Beys-Addy-Boolk." And he then rose and went to the boat which Orooblis was loading, and spoke to him; and when it was ready they seated themselves on board and sailed down the Tigris, having much pleasant discourse concerning distant lands and hills whose tops pierced the clouds, and were supposed to be the pillars that upheld the crystal dome of the heavens.

Haddad-Ben-Ahab rejoiced greatly as they sailed along, and at last they came to a little town, where Orooblis, having business in die-stuffs to transact, went on shore, leaving his friend. But in what corner of the earth this little town stood Haddad-Ben-Ahab knew not; for, like other travellers, he was not provided with much geographical knowledge.

But soon after the departure of Orooblis he thought he would also land and inquire. Accordingly, taking his pipe in his hand, he stepped out of the boat and went about the town, looking at many things, till he came to a wharf where a large ship was taking merchandise on board; and her sailors were men of a different complexion from that of the watermen who plied on the Tigris at Bagdad.

Haddad-Ben-Ahab looked at them, and as he was standing near to where they were at work, he thought that this ship afforded a better opportunity than he had enjoyed with Orooblis to see foreign countries. He accordingly went up to the captain and held out a handful of

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money, and indicated that he was desirous to sail away with the ship.

When the captain saw the gold he was mightily civil, and spoke to Haddad-Ben-Ahab with a loud voice, perhaps thinking to make him hear was the way to make him understand. But Haddad-Ben-Ahab only held up the forefinger of his right hand and shook it to and fro. In the end, however, he was taken on board the ship, and no sooner was he there than he sat down on a sofa, and drawing his legs up under him kindled his pipe and began to smoke, much at his ease, making observations with his eyes as he did so.

The first observation Haddad-Ben-Ahab made was, that the sofa on which he had taken his place was not at all like the sofas of Bagdad, and therefore when he returned he would show that he had not travelled without profit by having one made exactly similar for his best chamber, with hens and ducks under it, pleasantly feeding and joyously kackling and quacking. And he also observed a remarkable sagacity in the ducks, for when they saw he was a stranger, they turned up the sides of their heads and eyed him in a most curious and inquisitive manner—very different, indeed, to the ducks of Bagdad.

When the ship had taken on board her cargo, she spread her sails, and Haddad-Ben-Ahab felt himself in a new situation; for presently she began to lie over, and to plunge and revel among the waves like a glad creature. But Haddad-Ben-Ahab became very sick, and the captain showed him the way down into the inside of the vessel, where he went into a dark bed, and was charitably tended by one of the sailors for many days.

After a season there was much shouting on the deck of the ship, and Haddad-Ben-Ahab crawled out of his bed, and went to the sofa, and saw that the ship was near the end of her voyage.

When she had come to a bank where those on board could step out, Haddad-Ben-Ahab did so; and after he had seen all the strange things which were in the town where he thus landed, he went into a baker's shop—

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for they eat bread in that town as they do in Bagdad—and bought a loaf, which having eaten, he quenched his thirst at a fountain hard by, in his ordinary manner of drinking, at which he wondered exceedingly.

When he had solaced himself with all the wonders of that foreign city, he went to a fakier, who was holding two horses ready saddled; beautiful they were, and, as the fakier signified by signs, their hoofs were so fleet that they left the wind behind them. Haddad-Ben-Ahab then showed the fakier his gold, and mounted one of the horses, pointing with the shaft of his pipe to the fakier to mount the other; and then they both rode away into the country, and they found that the wind blew in their faces.

At last they came to a caravansary, where the fakier bought a cooked hen and two onions, of which they both partook, and stretching themselves before the fire which they had lighted in their chamber, they fell asleep, and slept until the dawn of day, when they resumed their journey into remoter parts and nearer to the wall of the world, which Haddad-Ben-Ahab conjectured they must soon reach. They had not, however, journeyed many days in the usual manner when they came to the banks of a large river, and the fakier would go no farther with his swift horses. Haddad-Ben-Ahab was in consequence constrained to pay and part from him, and to embark in a ferry-boat to convey him over the stream, where he found a strange vehicle with four horses standing ready to carry him on towards the wall of the world, "which surely," said he to himself, "ought not to be now far off."

Haddad-Ben-Ahab showed his gold again, and was permitted to take a seat in the vehicle, which soon after drove away; and he remarked in a most sagacious manner, that nothing in that country was like the things in his own; for the houses and trees, and all things ran away as the vehicle came up to them; and when it gave a jostle, they gave a jump; which he noted as one of the most extraordinary things he had seen since he left Bagdad.

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At last, Haddad-Ben-Ahab came to the foot of a lofty green mountain, with groves and jocund villages, which studded it, as it were, with gems and shining ornaments; and he said, "This must be the wall of the world, for surely nothing can exist on the other side of these hills! but I will ascend them and look over, for I should like to tell my friends in Bagdad what is to be seen on the outside of the earth." Accordingly he ascended the green mountain, and he came to a thick forest of stubby trees: "This is surprising," said Haddad-Ben-Ahab, "but higher I will yet go." And he passed through that forest of trees and came to a steep moorland part of the hill, where no living thing could be seen, but a solitude without limit, and the living world all glittering at the foot of the mountain.

"This is a high place," said Haddad-Ben-Ahab, "but I will yet go higher," and he began to climb with his hands. After an upward journey of great toil he came to a frozen region, and the top of the wall of the world was still far above him. He was, however, none daunted by the distance, but boldly held on in the ascent, and at last he reached the top of the wall. But when he got there, instead of a region of fog and chaos, he only beheld another world much like our own, and he was greatly amazed, and exclaimed with a loud voice—"Will my friends in Bagdad believe this?—but it is true, and I will so tell them." So he hastened down the mountain, and went with all the speed he could back to Bagdad; saying, "Bagdad," and giving gold to every man he met, until he reached the kiosk of dreams, where his friends were smoking and looking at the gambols of the Tigris.

When the friends of Haddad-Ben-Ahab saw him approach, they respectively took their pipes from their mouths and held them in their left hands, while they pressed their bosoms with their right, and received him with a solemn salaam, for he had been long absent, and all they in the mean time had heard concerning him was only what Orooblis, the Armenian dier, on his return told them: namely, that he was gone to the wall of the world, which limits the travels of man. No wonder

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then that they rejoiced with an exceeding gladness to see him return and take his place in the kiosk among them, as if he had never been a day's journey away from Bagdad.

They then questioned him about his adventures, and he faithfully related to them all the wonders which have been set forth in our account of the journey; upon which they declared he had made himself one of the sages of the earth.

Afterward they each made a feast, to which they invited all the philosophers in Bagdad, and Haddad-Ben-Ahab was placed in the seat of honour, and being courteously solicited, told them of his travels, and every one cried aloud, "God is great, and Mahomet is his prophet!"

When they had in this manner banqueted, Haddad-Ben-Ahab fell sick, and there was a great talk concerning the same. Some said he was very ill; others shook their heads and spoke not; but the world is full of envy and hard-heartedness, and those who were spiteful because of the renown which Haddad-Ben-Ahab, as a traveller who had visited the top of the wall of the world with so much courage, had acquired, jeered at his malady, saying he had been only feasted overmuch. Nevertheless Haddad-Ben Ahab died; and never was such a funeral seen in all Bagdad, save that of the caliph Mahoud, commonly called the Magnificent. Such was the admiration in which the memory of the traveller was held, the poets made dirges on the occasion, and mournful songs were heard in the twilight from the windows of every harem. Nor did the generation of the time content itself with the ceremonies of lamentation: they caused a fountain to be erected, which they named the Fountain of Haddad-Ben-Ahab, the traveller; and when the slaves go to fetch water, they speak of the wonderful things he did, and how he was on the top of the wall of the world, and saw the outside of the earth; so that his memory lives for ever among them, as one of the greatest, the wisest, and the bravest of men.

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THE GIPSY OF THE ABRUZZO.

BY TYRONE POWER.*

CHAPTER I.

The hot south-east wind had prevailed all day, and cast gloom and languor over the lovely valley of Salmona—a spot worthy of having given birth to the amiable Naso; that immortal poet, whose glowing imagination has so truly painted those "charming agonies of love, whose misery delights."

It was near to that spot still known to the peasantry as *La Bottega d'Ovidio*, that the young Donna Constanza stayed her eager palfrey to let him drink of the limpid stream of *Gli Fonte d'Amore*. Notwithstanding the sickening oppression of the malaria, now fast pervading the heated breeze, the flush of hope and happiness sat upon the maiden's brow, and the smile of youthful joy played around her pouting lips. While her horse sucked up the cooling draught, a voice from beneath called out in low but musical tones, "Gentil' Donna," two several times before she could recognise whence it proceeded.

"Gentil' Donna," said the voice, a third time, "fling a ducat on the margin of *Gli Fonte d'Amore*, and I'll read you your fortune."

The lady now discerned the speaker where he lay stretched at full length beneath the thick olive that shaded one side of the spring.

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"This is no hour to have fortune read," replied the donna; "but here's a gold zechino for thy good wishes, for truly never did I need fortune more. Here, Andreas, rein up thy steed, and bear the coin to him."

"Touch it not, Messer Andreas," sharply cried the first speaker, addressing the waiting servitor; "'twill blister thy fingers else."

Andreas instinctively started from the proffered gold: the speaker laughed, and in a softened tone continued:—

"Fling it thou upon the flowery turf, made ever verdant by the waters of *Gli Fonte d'Amore:* fling it freely down, and thy love, lady, shall never know cross again."

A deep suffusion passed over the cheek of Constanza.

"The baron is in sight, donna," announced Andreas.

"Then let us ride on," she replied, as, with a look that seemed to say, I would hear more if occasion suited, she flung the coin towards the prophet; and, giving her spirited palfrey the rein, she galloped lightly on towards the castello.

"Your fortune is read, *molto beato*, and may your star never shine less brightly than at this hour," cried the man, springing up, and displaying the well-known equipment of the *Zingaro*—one of a race, half-bandit, half-gipsy, who were, at this period, thickly located about the wild mountain-track lying between Isernia and Popoli, and extending from the lake of Celano across the Maronne and Matesse. In his hand he bore a staff full nine feet long,—this was his only apparent weapon; from his neck hung a rudely-formed guitar, a long hair-net constrained his luxuriant black locks, and a large leafed hat lay back upon his shoulders, sustained by a narrow leather strap passed across his forehead. His nether man was clad in loose breeches of dark-yellow cotton, drawn tight below the knee; a greave-shaped leathern gaiter covered his leg nearly to the ankle, where it was met by the lacing of the rude sandal, which barely protected the sole of the foot. A

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short closely-fitted jerkin of deer-skin, and a very large *capa* of coarse black cloth, completed the wardrobe of the very picturesque-looking youth, who, leaning on his staff, watched the receding figure of the beautiful Constanza. There was a yellowish tint in his complexion which would have given a sickly character to the countenance, but that it was more than counteracted by the lustrous brightness of his large black eyes, the redness of his lips, and a set of teeth, which, from their strength and whiteness, seemed formed for eternity. In figure he was about the middle height; his limbs light and long, denoting both strength and elasticity.

As the cortège of the baron drew near, the youth thus minutely described moved round the spring, and having picked from the turf the piece of gold, rapidly darted away; and by the aid of his pole readily clearing the many streams which intersected the meadow, made for the olive-grove, which covered one side of the steep hill leading to the castello.

This was the day of the festival of the patron-saint of the monastery of the *Annunziata*, and in despite of the sirocco, the Baron de Mirialva had attended the ceremony in company with his niece. They had left the castle at daybreak, and were now returning from the monastery accompanied by some of the neighbouring nobility. It was on this day, in the church of the Annunziata, Constanza had recovered the smiles stolen from her brow, ever since the hour her uncle first announced the feud which separated her from Luigi Conradini, her long-affianced and heart-chosen lord. It was from the hand of a mendicant palmer to whom she tended alms, in the gloomy aisles of the church, she received the electric touch which imparted new life to her heart. It was from beneath that pilgrim's hood the glances shot which had kindled anew the fire of joy in her eyes; and it was to read the letter of love, hidden next her beating heart, whose lines, indeed, were to decide her fate, that she now spurred homeward so freely, heedless of the heat of sun or air.

The same day was far advanced, when the gipsy

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stood close before the noble gate of the Castell de Mirialva, and while tuning his guitar, the wanderer's constant recommendation, disturbed the rest of the pampered porter who sat within its shade.

"Peace, and quit thy thrumming, rogue; thou cannot expect to steal aught here," growled the unmusical servitor; "what wouldst thou?"

"Something to eat, and somewhere to shelter me within these ample walls," replied the youth, sadly; "see you the threatening storm?"

"Diavolo, Zingaro!" rejoined the porter, "thou must have profited little by thy bringing up, if a coming storm or a night's lying in the air, with a gray stone pillow and a sky-coloured coverlid, can give thee much care."

"But, charity, good Signor Castellan!"

"Ay, ay, I am charitable to the real necessitoso, even to overflowing, and give abundantly to the worthy fathers of San Dominico. The convent of Monte Garigliano is hardly a league lower down; and if thou usest lightly those long legs of thine thou mayst yet cross the torrent before the mountain-waters find their way there. The holy fathers are excellent judges of the proper objects of compassion; go, tinkle thy guitar at their gate, and see if thy Zingaro ditties may win thee straw and a supper. Ho, ho!—Pah! that puff of malaria was the very breath of *Satan;* the true blast of the sirocco—away, rogue! Off from the portal, and let me close out thy ill-breathing, and thy master, the Devil's, together—it will not harm thee, 'tis thy native air; so good night, poveretto."

"The malaria be your only breathing, son of a bandog, until your bloated form be as black and as foul as the heart within it!" muttered the repulsed suppliant, as he turned from the closely-barred portal of the castello, and fixed his eyes upon the mighty masses of cloud now fast descending on every side, obscuring the close of day and creating a premature night, by colouring every object with their sickly saffron hue, only contrasted by the fiery glare of the vivid lightning, shot at intervals from their laden bosoms.

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A few heavy raindrops, splashing upon the hard and thirsty soil, gave note of the coming storm, and promised a speedy termination to the sirocco that had blown all day. Though it was late, the birds, by a sudden quick and lively note, seemed to offer up thanks to the God of Nature for the relief about to be afforded them. The leaves of the olive, too, emitted a gentle rustling sound, as if eager to court the coming gale, that with cool breath began already to puff back the baleful blast, under whose withering influence all beneath the sky had seemed to droop and sicken.

"'Twill be a heavy fall, and soon too," muttered the gipsy, as, after a moment's observation of the heavens, he leaned upon his staff, and glanced about him; "and not a chance of shelter, except I crawl like a hound under some projection of these walls, upon which my curse should light, but that I watched the fair form of her who flung me this zechino, gallop lightly beneath them. Gold, humph! if I were in a city now this would win me supper and shelter from Christian or pagan; but of what use is it upon the mountain? A thousand such pieces would not bribe yon overladen cloud to bear its waters a league farther, and leave me in a dry skin. No! man alone knows its influence, and the ring of this tiny bit of yellow metal would thrill even to the *heart* of the churl who now bars me in the storm,—would even charm him to change hands and touch cup with the Zingaro. *Sformato!* if ever we meet on the mountain I'll read thee a true fortune; ay, and see to its fulfilment too, even as near to the end of thy life as may well be with safety."

The glance that accompanied this promise fully vouched for the sincerity of the speaker, who now pulled over his brows the large-leafed hat which had hitherto lain upon his shoulders, drew the hanging part of his hair-net tightly under his throat, and, folding his coarse capa closely about his person, seemed fully prepared to abide the pitiless pelting of the coming maestro, as with a quick and stealthy pace he turned the leeward angle of the casa.

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CHAPTER II.

'Twas about the second hour of morning, the storm had done its errand, and was passed away, and the dome of heaven showed clear and unclouded. The cool breeze blew freshly, and formed a singular contrast to the dull suffocating wind that had prevailed during the preceding day. The deep shadows of the castello were flung far down the side of the hill upon which it was reared, and the only sound that broke on nature's repose was the distant roar of the swollen waters of the Pescara. A tall and stately cavalier was eagerly climbing the most precipitate part of the hill, over which hung a large projecting window; he halted as he arrived beneath it, and after gazing in silence for an instant, eagerly unwound his scarf, and waved it to and fro in the air.

"No," he at length murmured in a tone of bitter disappointment; "there is no hope; the light has long been extinguished, and she has despaired of my coming. I would I had plunged into the torrent that detained me; death would have been less painful than the eternal misery of hope delayed—could I yet apprize her that I am here without noise—but how? Stephano is with the horses, and I could as soon scale the Duomo as reach that cursed window. I would give a thousand ducats to see it fairly opened."

"A bargain, Signor Cavaliero," was at once whispered, in a clear and distinct though low tone, which seemed to rise close from beneath the signor's feet; he cast his eyes downwards, and observed, rolled up in a coin of the buttress, immediately under shelter of the window, a dark-looking mass, from out of which a pair of twinkling eyes were fixed intensely upon him.

"Who art thou?" he demanded, fiercely, "lying

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coiled up there like the lynx of the Abruzzo? Come forth quickly, and show thy form and errand, or I'll unkennel thee else with the point of my spada."

"Don't do that, signor," again whispered the voice; "dont do that, for when tickled, I have an ugly trick of laughing loud enough to be heard at a round league, and listeners *might* choose to seek out the joke sooner than you could be prepared to join in it."

"Come forth, sirrah knave, and fear not—only inform me what thou hast been doing in that lair, and why there at all?"

"Veramente, signor, I am here for lack of better shelter, and have been doing what I still had done but for your coming, sleeping sound—as the cat sleeps;—my ear is quick, signor, and my eye is quicker. I know you, *Luigi Conradini*, and could guess your present business here, ay, and could help you to do it into the bargain."

"And what are you that read me this riddle?"

"One who lives by riddles, a Zingaro," answered the speaker, rising nimbly to his full height, and shaking about him the folds of his capa.

"Ha! methinks I have seen thy face before, friend!"

"And I am sure I have seen yours, signor. Zingaro never yet forgot the face of friend or foe."

"Am I then to conclude myself recognised as the former, since you so readily proffer service?"

"Not more promptly, signor, than you extended it to me twelve months agone this very day, in the wood of Venafro, when the king's hounds turned off the trail of the deer to nose me, where I lay *perdu* under a tree, watching the chase, and the *chasseurs* were going to hang me up as a scarecrow for throwing them out—ay, and but for your prompt word had done it too. Now, signor, what can I do to repay the obligation? Fear not to trust me, I am yours to the death—for gratitude, like vengeance, should be *senza limito.*"

"I fear me, Zingaro, that thy service, though honestly and freely proffered, may little avail me in this strait, unless thou hast wit to conjure me into yonder window, or

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give warning in a whisper to her who no longer watches, that he whom she loves is here."

"Humph! both may be contrived, and without aid of the Devil, if you, signor, can afford to part with a portion of your dignity, and putting forth the native strength of your manhood, so become my bearer for a brief space."

"I do not rightly comprehend, but fear not my compliance; if thou canst but make it appear that by bearing thee I may enter yon chamber—but, pshaw! the thing has no likelihood; that window is a good twenty feet from the ground we tread on."

"Ha, ha! I have scaled a higher wall to rob a meal of flour from the Fornajo, and for the wealth and beauty that await thee!—*Animo*, Luigi Conradini! stand on this bench; so—why there's two feet less distance between thee and thy mistress already. Now take this pole, and drive the iron point into the opposite buttress with all thy might, and as high above head as may be: strike manfully for thy lady's love." The count raised his arm, and the point of the staff was buried between the huge stones.

"Well stricken," signor, cried the gipsy; "now lend me that silken scarf; elevate thine arms to the uttermost—so, now hold firm the pole, and stand fast, for my limbs might be periled if thine fail."

Agilely springing upon Conte Luigi's shoulders, the gipsy next stepped lightly upon the tough pole, which the lover with his vigorous arms bore above his head, pressing against the point which rested in the opposite wall; once at this elevation, he dexterously threw the scarf round one of the frightfully-carved heads which projected by way of ornament from the ends of the beams that supported the window, and seemed to grin defiance on all below; this done, to twist the two parts of the scarf together, and climb up by shifting his hands alternately one over the other, with the lightness and nimbleness of a marmot, was the work of a moment.

He tried the casement—it yielded to the touch, and

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the long-desired haven stood open before the anxiously-watching lover of Constanza, who, making a sign to his assistant, quickly drew from his cloak a light but strong ladder of silken cordage, and flinging up one end to be hooked to the window's edge, fastened the other to the rude bench below, and promptly mounting entered the chamber.

"The thousand ducats are mine," whispered the gipsy-boy in the ear of the count.

"They will not be the moiety of thy reward," answered Conradini eagerly, "if I this night succeed in my hopes."

"*Basta*, signor," rejoined the successful climber; "let me first rub out the debt contracted in the forest of Venafro, before we begin a new score."

"This apartment," continued the count, "is one of the suite occupied by Constanza; her dressing-room should be somewhere near the window on the right-hand. Ah! during our days of happiness, I knew well each turning in these apartments; and did the good old marchese, her father, still live, I need not now be seeking my affianced bride by night, and in darkness, as a thief seeks his prey."

"Why I fancy I feel more at home in the darkness than you do, signor," interrupted the gipsy, as they felt along the wall. "Ha! perchance here is the very door; a light within too!—by your leave, Messer Key; all is well—*Eccola*, signor; condescend to place your eye here and behold her whom you seek."

The count instinctively obeyed. It was indeed Constanza: she was still equipped as if for the saddle, except that she had thrown aside her hat and plume. Her beautiful countenance was suffused with the tears still falling upon an open letter that lay upon the table before her, and with whose contents she was intensely occupied. A half-uttered exclamation from the count reached her ear; she listened with doubting eagerness—a low tap was next heard on the door, and "*Constanza*" was softly whispered in those tones in which none ever breathed her name, save only one. She

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started to her feet, and gazed timidly around, passing her hand across her forehead. The next moment she had flung wide the chamber-door, and the swart form of the Zingaro stood before her! She saw no more; a wild piercing scream burst from her lips, and covering her face with her hands, she sank senseless into the arms of her betrothed husband, Luigi Conradini.

"*Diavolo!* signor, was it your looks or mine that so terrified the donna?"

"We are lost!" exclaimed the count, "lost beyond hope; her loud scream must have alarmed the household, and my life will be the sacrifice to her guardian uncle's anger and revenge."

"Nay, then," cried his companion, "resign thy senseless prize, and let us two fly; 'tis ill arguing with an angry guardian on his own ground."

"Not so, but do thou leave me, good fellow! take this purse and fly; for myself, I will abide the worst, and die, rather than again be separated from her for whom alone I wish to live."

A distant noise, as if of approaching footsteps, was now heard. The Zingaro paused for a moment, as he quietly put aside the proffered gold; he cast his eyes on the senseless form of Constanza, over which the count fondly hung; then, as if suddenly having resolved and decided on his course, he exclaimed, taking the hand of the lady—

"I this day read you a fair fortune, donna, and it must be fulfilled; take up your mistress, signor, and bear her down the ladder."

"'Tis useless, worthy fellow: already I hear the sound of advancing feet at the end of the corridor; we should be pursued and seized ere I could bear this dear burthen half-way down the hill to where my good horses wait."

"You shall not be pursued. I will remain behind, will close down the window, lead them on a wrong scent, and so win you ample time—away, come!"

"How! *you* remain! but your life will—"

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"I know, I know, signor; my neck will be put in some jeopardy, but that is an every-day venture—if I 'scape, so—if not, at worst, hanging is the natural death of our race, and I am already some twelve months older than I should have been but for your interference—so I owe you a death. Ha! they are getting impatient without; so courage, signor. the fresh air revives her already—there, throw your cloak round her head; let her not again get sight of my face to terrify her anew. Ha, ha, ha! I never judged before it was so forbidding to the sex."

A violent hammering was now heard on the outer door of the corridor, together with the baron's voice ordering it to be broken down. The count and his lovely prize were by this time at the foot of the ladder—he looked back to the gipsy, and urged him to descend.

"Down with thee, my brave lad, and try thy fortune with us!"

"You were lost if I did that," answered the youth, coolly. "Adieu, Luigi Conradini. Tell the donna 'twas I who yesterday read her fortune by the waters *Gli Fonti d'Amore.* And hark! should the aged of our race ever cross your path, fling a coin in their way for my sake, and confess that the gratitude of lo Zingaro is *senza limito.*"

He closed the window with the last word, and softly entering the chamber of Constanza, had just time to secure the lock, when the outer door was burst open, and the baron appeared, surrounded by a crowd of half-dressed domestics, who all eagerly pressed forward, alarmed at the thought of their young lady's danger.

"All here is quiet," said the baron, after looking about him for a moment; "are you sure it was the Donna Constanza's voice you heard, calling for help?"

"*Per certo*, signor," answered a domestic, "and when first I listened at the outer door, I heard more than one voice whispering in this very room."

"And I," said another, "heard the most fearful scream."

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"Scream! several screams you mean, or Heaven mend your hearing," added a third.

"Peace, knaves!" said the baron, as he knocked at his niece's chamber. All were silent, but no answer was returned; repeating his summons in a louder key, he next called upon her within but to assure him of her safety: still echo was his only reply. "The girl has not surely been mad enough to attempt her life, for love of the foolish boy to whom her father in his dotage betrothed her? Here, Jocope, try thy hammer on this door."

This command was immediately followed by a storm of blows upon the door, under which, after a gallant resistance, the stout cedar at length gave way, and the hallowed sanctuary of beauty lay open to the profanation of the vulgar gaze.

The domestics hung back, from a mingled feeling of respect and apprehension, and the baron alone entered the chamber. All within bore testimony to the taste and elegance of the inhabitant, but showed not any sign of violence or even discomposure. Upon the table stood an extinguished taper, and near it lay the guitar and music, last touched by the fair hand of Constanza. A velvet curtain hung before the recess in which stood her couch; this was lowered, and as the baron gently drew it aside he perceived the bed was occupied.

"This," he cried, in astonishment, "is most strange surely the wilful girl is moonstruck; Constanza, answer me! Constanza!" he repeated, striking the coverlid violently with his hand. "Nay, this foolery is too much for patience; therefore, bring lights here, knaves. Fair lady, by your leave; for your face I will see, and your voice I will hear, ere I sleep again."

"You must ride hard, or watch long, then, *grandissimo*," cried the occupant, rising up as the baron laid his hand upon the bed. The attendants rolled back upon each other in affright; even the stout Mirialva recoiled, as if he had touched a torpedo.

Well might the nerves of the Donna Constanza quail beneath the glance of the Zingaro as he now appeared.

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His capa was discoloured by the red soil he had so long lain upon; his long elfin locks, escaped from their thraldom during the storm, hung in wild disorder about his face, while his eyes, full of the excitement that stirred within him, blazed with an almost unearthly brightness.

"Devil!" exclaimed the baron, after recovering from the surprise of this most unexpected vision, "what has led thy fiend-like carcass to so unfitting a resting-place?"

"The stars," was the prompt reply, uttered with an oracular wave of the hand; "the stars, which govern and decide our destinies, and with whose mighty influence it were as vain to contend as to puff a feather against the raging blast of the maestro, or stay the determined will of woman's first love."

"Dog of a cursed breed! thou shalt find it was an evil star led thee to thrust thy handiwork between me and my will! Where is my niece? Speak, hast thou murdered her?"

"The blood of woman never yet followed blow of mine; nor ever did the lust of gold lead me to thrust my will between her and her heart's choice."

"Peace, slave! Answer thou my questioning, and utter word more or less than to that end, and I'll have thy saucy tongue torn from its foul root. Thou canst tell the course she has taken?"

"Ay, if you once put me upon her track, my eye is keen enough to distinguish the light foot of a lady from the spur of the lynx."

"Who is her companion?"

"At this minute it would be wild to swear that; some time has passed since I last saw her, and women at the best are variable in their fancies."

"Holy Mother! the unblest churl juggles with my patience. Ho, there! drag this foul carrion from out the bed; strip the deer's hide from his back, and lash him till he learn straight speech."

On the gipsy's being hauled from the couch, and placed upright on the floor, his limbs apparently re-

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fused their wonted service, and he at once sunk down like a thing wholly bereft of bone and muscle; this dogged and passive resistance being the only opposition he thought fit to offer, he was quickly raised upon the shoulders of four stout fellows, and borne to the hall; where, still refusing to stand, his jerkin was slashed with knives from his back, and with such little care, that blood was seen to follow more than one blade. In this work, Jocope, the surly porter, was conspicuously officious.

"We'll make it more difficult for you to stand ere we're done dealing on your swart hide!" whispered the fellow, as he assisted in dragging the prisoner's arms round the marble pillar they were made to embrace. When bound, with the upper part of his body exposed and naked for the lash, Jocope approached him, armed with a heavy whip. "I owe thee my service, son of Satan," he whispered in his victim's ear. "What, thou wouldst have tricked me into taking thee under shelter of the castello, to cut our throats, as well as spirit away my young lady, eh! But for once thou hadst to deal with thy master."

"Thou didst deal wisely in barring me out, truly, *spietato!*" replied the gipsy, with a bitter smile of triumph.

"Lay on, and spare not!" impatiently cried the baron; and he seated himself to see the cruel order fully carried into effect.

The stalwart arm of the ruffian porter plied his instrument of torture with such coolness and skill that a streak of red marked the course of every lash. With eyes and teeth firmly compressed, and without suffering a groan to escape him, the wretched youth bore for awhile his punishment; even the fiercely-exerted strength of his torturer began to flag, when turning his eyes towards the baron, the sufferer cried, "Hold!" At a sign the next blow was suspended.

"What, thou hast found thy tongue?" demanded Mirialva.

"And how am I to be benefited by using it according to your will?"

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"Thou shalt have a couch of straw, and bread and water, till to-morrow; then a strong cord and a fair spring from the top of the castle-gate."

"Hum! fair offers and tempting! what if I still keep silence?"

"Thou shalt be now flogged as near to thy death as may be done on this holy Sabbath morn," sternly replied Mirialva; "and on the morrow shall await thee a like punishment, to be continued until thy dark spirit be dismissed to the hell it sprung from!"

"Umph, unbind me!" calmly said the gipsy. "I choose straw and a supper, the long cord and the free spring; but, hold! you will not, after squeezing me dry, put me again under lash?"

"I have promised thee respite until Monday morn; wilt thou not take the given word of a *Roman baron?*"

"As readily as you would take Zingaro *oath*, sworn on the ROOD! Touch with your lips the cross of your dagger, and on it swear to keep faith with me, or my lips are again sealed, and for ever!"

"Unbelieving miscreant!" exclaimed the baron, starting in rage from his seat; "I am well-enough minded to put thy stoutness to the proof."

Prudence, however, and the desire of a nobler victim for revenge overruled this momentary burst of passion. Making, therefore, the prescribed oath, he again took his seat.

"A draught of water to moisten my parched throat, and my cloak to cover over my shame, and then your questions, signor, I am ready to answer."

Water was brought, and the capa thrown upon his lacerated shoulders. He calmly drew his cloak about him, and bowed slightly, in token of being prepared; the baron began:—

"Who was the contriver and companion of my niece's flight?"

"The husband chosen by her father, the Count Luigi Conradini."

"Ha! is it so? And how gained he access to her chamber?"

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"That service I contrived for him."

The baron cast a glance of deathful import on the unflinching speaker, then went on.

"Knowest thou where they now be?"

"With willing minds, sharp spurs, and stout steeds they may now be wellnigh across the Pettorano."

"Then they are bound for Naples?"

"For Naples."

"Now art thou a lying knave; for mortal man dare not venture to cross the Pescara after the rain of last night."

"The Count Luigi had already crossed it, though somewhat later than he had looked to do; a delay that had wellnigh lost him his fair prize."

"May its swollen waters 'whelm them both, and for ever!" cried the baron, as he started up and rapidly paced the hall. "Ho, there! to horse, some of you; hasten to the river, and see if it be yet fordable; look close for the new track of horses, and ride upon the spur; a *thousand ducats* to him who brings back my niece, or can show me a blade died with the heart's blood of Luigi Conradini. Take hence that hound, bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the tapestried chamber at the extremity of my gallery; let him have bread and water, and straw to lie on. If thy story be true, and the torrent fordable, I will keep faith with thee, and on the morrow thou shalt have a strong cord, and die the death of thy fathers; but if thou hast spoken a lie, thou shalt be whipped until thy false heart be laid bare to the sun, whose beams shall wither it within thee."

"By the *star* that rules me, I have spoken truly, Baron Mirialva."

The clatter of the departing horsemen was now heard as they hastily spurred over the paved court.

"Ha, ha, ha! they must ride and spare not, who seek to win back time past, or true lovers flown," continued the Zingaro, as he was led from the hall to his prison-chamber.

During the foregoing events, Time had held on his

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unchanging, unchangeable course; and as the prisoner was thrust into his last earthly lodging, he was saluted by the first burst of a bright morning sun, darting its many-coloured rays through the stained glass of a narrow window, placed high overhead, and indeed the only means of supplying with either light or air this gloomy chamber.

The Zingaro gazed for a moment at the cheerful light, half-shading his brow with his hand; then, turning to his guards, he requested that they would place him within the influence of its beams.

"Ay, to be sure," was the reply: "Nicola, toss down that straw here; the poor devil wants to sun himself."

"He's no judge of astronomy, then," answered the bearer of straw, "or he'd have known that the rays of the morning sun will rest but a short space where they now fall: no, no, poor ignorant, if thou wouldst have the sun for company, I'll put thy straw in yonder nook, where he will sleep awhile after midday."

"Put it down here," said the Zingaro, adhering to the same spot; "'tis not his noonbeam I would watch, for that I shall never see again; no, 'tis his earliest light on the morrow I would fain give greeting to, that I may know how near is the hour of my end as I watch my last sun rise."

"O, that's it," replied the astronomer; "then even so be it—have thy bed where thou wilt. But methinks thine is an odd fancy; now I, though naturally of an inquiring turn, am no way curious about seeing my last sun rise, and don't care, in troth, if I never see it at all, so I live the longer—but every man to his humour: so there. But, by your leave, we must bind your hands and legs, for you Zingari are but slippery subjects; however, with this little precaution, and without outlet, except for a weasel, through yon window, I think thou mayst be trusted. Now thou'rt fast, here's thy bread and water; at nightfall I'll not fail to bring thee a fresh supply; and, unless thou have stomach for a right early breakfast, thy turn of eating may be then considered

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pretty well served for this world. 'Tisn't every man that's doomed to the dog's death that meets such gentle fare or soft lodging; but a bargain's a bargain, and thou'lt find the baron a man of his word; so, till night, rest in peace, honest pagan. Come, comrades, leave the Zingaro to his repose; there's no fear of his being troubled with nightmare, for he wont lie much on his back, I guess—ha, ha, ha!"

Amid the loud laughter this jest created, the door was firmly secured without, and the subject of this brutal mirth was left alone.

The tapestried chamber was a large square apartment, never used but for one melancholy service,—that of guarding the mortal remains of the lords of Mirialva during their brief passage from the death-bed to the tomb.

In this chamber was prepared the last display of earthly vanity attendant upon departed greatness; here was laid out in all the impotence of lifeless clay the once mighty lord of a thousand vassals. The room was, in conformity with its sad purpose, hung round with black tapestry, that had once, no doubt, been of exquisite workmanship; but, from age and neglect, it now was torn in many places, and in others hung loose from the wall. With the exception of the high window described above, a stout oaken door, leading into a gallery belonging to the baron's apartments, was the only outlet; a more secure or melancholy prison, therefore, could not easily have been imagined; a like conviction appeared to enter on the prisoner's mind, for after a keen and searching glance around him, which, as he gazed on his own fettered limbs, settled at length into a look of fixed despair—

"The slaves," he exclaimed, "have bound my hands so straitly, that the food they have thrown me is useless, for nor hand nor foot can I stir. The hypocrites would not hang on their Sabbath, but think it no sin to scourge and starve. But 'tis no matter, I need not much strength to *hang*, and there is, I fancy, no hope of respite or escape; so good day, fair sun! and welcome be thy first ray to-morrow!"

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So saying, the captive turned himself composedly upon his straw, and enjoyed, hungry and lacerated as he was, a sounder sleep than visited the pillow of "thrice-driven down," pressed by the proud baron who thirsted for his blood.

Carlette Mirialva was the younger brother of the late marchese, and the inheritor of his titles and estates: early plunged in dissipation and overwhelmed with debt, the latter he had anticipated long before his brother's death, and consequently, when this event took place, he had little to avail himself of but the empty title. Before the death of the marchese every thing had been arranged between him and the father of Conradini for the marriage of their children; it was postponed only by the illness of the marchese, and with his dying-breath he enjoined the fulfilment of his pledge upon his brother. This, however, would have ill suited the views of the needy gamester. The Castell di Mirialva and the property in the Abruzzo formed the inheritance of Constanza in right of her mother; and this must have been necessarily given up to her husband upon her marriage, leaving the proud baron houseless, or compelling him to avow his folly, and rest dependent on his niece's bounty, until time should pay his debts, and again make him master of his own ample domains. His first act, therefore, on his brother's death was to refuse his consent to the fulfilment of the marriage contract, unless it were stipulated that he should be left master of this domain for so many years. Luigi and Constanza were too far gone in love not to have agreed readily to his wishes; but not so the elder Conradini; he, with the prudence attendant on his age, and the indignation natural to a high mind, replied by spurning the unworthy proposal in no measured terms. An open and violent rupture was the immediate consequence, which threatened, in the end, to sunder the lovers for ever; for Constanza was but seventeen, and the laws left her at her uncle's disposal until she should attain the age of three-and-twenty, a century in true love's calendar. Many months had elapsed since

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this disagreement, and numerous were the suitors introduced by the baron for his own purposes, and rejected by Constanza with a firmness well-worthy her name.

At length the festival of the Annunziata enabled Conradini, in the disguise of a mendicant palmer, to communicate to her his wishes, and his plans for their execution; and so well did he describe, in his letter, the present misery of separation, and the risks he had run in vain to see or communicate with her; and in such bright colours did he contrast the happiness and security awaiting them in flight, and in the fulfilment of a marriage already plighted before Heaven and sanctified in their hearts, that Constanza, on that very night, heedless of the storm which raged without, had frankly obeyed the directions of her lover, and like another Hero, placed a light in her turret window, at once to be the guide to his steps, and the token of her own readiness to follow them.

It has been already told how the swollen Pescara detained her eager deliverer, until, mortified and wearied, she, two hours after midnight, withdrew her beacon, and abandoned herself to grief. Grief soon changed to joy by the embrace of her long-banished Luigi.

This retrospective detail will at once explain the baron's cause for rage, and his eager thirst for vengeance, not only on Conradini, but on the humbler agent of his loss, the luckless Zingaro, whom no laws of the time either acknowledged or protected. His wretched race were left, like the wild animals of the rude country they inhabited, to roam at large through the desert, and like them too were liable to be hunted to the death by any noble sportsman who might choose, at his own proper peril, to follow such diversion.

Anxiously did the Baron di Mirialva count each minute of that Sabbath morn, that holy Sabbath, ordained as a day of repose, both from the toils and passions of frail nature—a day wisely sanctified and set apart for reflection and repentance. But far otherwise were employed the thoughts of Mirialva; intensely did he listen to each sound, eager to catch the footfall of

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returning horse; constantly were his strained eyes fixed on the approach from the banks of the Pescara, while his heart was consuming within him, fired by the demons Avarice, Anger, and Revenge.

A horseman at length appeared, whose hard-spurred, jaded steed could hardly bear its rider up the steep. The baron flew to the gate to meet him—with the hellish hope in his heart, and the wish on his lip, he demanded, "Well, have they been tracked? have you overtaken the runagates? is *he* dead? Say yes, and boldly claim the promised thousand ducats, and more, thy lord's eternal favour."

The vassal hung his head in silence. One by one the wearied riders returned with no better success, till at last but one remained out on whom to rest a hope. But the baron knew well the nature of the hound that still hung upon the track, and while Jocope returned not, he did not entirely abandon his demon-like hope. Right well this worthy servant merited the confidence of such a master; patient, wearyless, and true to the scent of blood, as the hound of whose savage nature he so largely partook, he, though outstripped and baffled, still hunted on, a dogged instinct his guide, and the promised gold his spur.

CHAPTER III.

The shades of evening had once more fallen upon the valleys of the Abruzzo before the Zingaro was reawakened to a sense of pain and hunger. As he slowly turned upon his straw, he cast his eyes upwards on the now almost darkened window; suddenly a gleam of wild and unrestrained joy lighted up his pallid and worn features—his sight became riveted to the object, as he cried aloud—

"'Tis there! 'tis there! It shines bright and daz-

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zlingly upon me, unclouded and serene, the star of my birth and the guide of our race. I saw it twinkling thus in my past dream of freedom. Hail to thee, herald of hope! Thou didst shine thus lightly upon me, as, but now, in sleep, I sat again by our mountain-stream with Zea by my side; and once more listened to her sweet voice, as it rose in thy praise, attuned to the guitar she best loves to hear! Thou art still above me, shining star, and I am not forsaken! Thou art still unclouded, and I will not despair, for never wouldst thou rise so brightly at eve, were a son of thy people to die the cruel death ere thy setting."

With the spirit of new-born hope did the captive now await the approach of his jailer, as he heard the massy bolts withdrawn; for, true to his promise, Nicola again stood beside him, bearing a fresh allowance of bread and water.

"Why, how's this," said the man, observing the former supply still remaining; "thy food and drink untouched? Mass, but thou art somewhat dainty in thy fare, or hast a marvellous gift of long fasting. Why hast thou not broken bread, Zingaro? thy hanging to-morrow will be none the more agreeable, because thou art some pounds the lighter; why, man, thou'lt be as hard to die as a cat; eat and drink, and prepare for thy ending as like a good Christian as one of thy doomed breed can."

"How can I do either?" bitterly replied the prisoner; "your food is left but as a mockery, when my lips might parch for a drop of water, ere I, thus tightly bound, could moisten them. What fear you, that you thus pinion me? Escape were impossible, unless I had wings like a bird, and no more bulk than a shadow; for otherwise I could neither reach, nor pass out of yonder window."

"Why, there is some reason in that," rejoined the jailer, glancing round; "and though the baron ordered thee to be bound, he also intended thou shouldst eat, or else he had ne'er promised thee food—so, by our Lady, I'll strain my warranty and loose thy cords a

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trifle—and more, thou shalt have the bottom of my wine flask to give a whet to thy appetite.

"There! with two foot between hand and hand, a man may do much, with a hungry stomach and good will—thou need'st not thy feet to help thy feeding, so we'll let them be; and if they feel somewhat tight-laced, why console thee, 'tis but a few hours, and then thou mayst kick away with them like an unbroken colt—ha, ha, ha! Nay, never lower at my joke, man—thou relishest the smack of the wine though, ha? Well, finish it then, and welcome, for now we're alone, between thee and me and the wall, I owe thee no ill-will for helping the Lady Constanza to the man she liked, and am not sorry the young birds have shown them such strong wing."

"The horsemen have then returned?" demanded the Zingaro.

"Ay, come back, empty handed; all but one, and he'll get little but wrung withers and dirty boots for his ride, I guess."

"Who is he that still hangs on the track of his lord's daughter?"

"Who but Jocope, the porter," said Nicola; "and as for hanging, by the mass, for the gold that's promised, he'd hang a slip-knot round the neck of the brother that twinned at birth with him."

While the jailer thus indulged his gossiping propensity, the Zingaro eagerly continued to eat and drink; and as from time to time his dark eye flashed upwards, it would kindle with hope revived, and reveal a thousand thick-coming fancies of liberty and vengeance. In a few moments Nicola rose to depart.

"Adieu till morn, Zingaro," he said; "eat thy last supper, and sleep soundly; fear not to be awakened in *hanging* time—ha, ha, ha! Nay, no anger at my jest! thou wouldst like well enough to list to it this time tomorrow."

The door again closed; the bolts again jarred on the ear; and the Zingaro was once more alone. But he was no longer the inanimate log that for so many hours had lain without exhibiting one sign of life or motion;

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but alert, active, and stirring, with a glance like the hawk, and with vigour and ingenuity equal to his will.

First, with the assistance of his teeth he managed to spread before him his capa, and then, from a secret pouch within its folds he drew forth the hidden implements for procuring light, which ever formed a part of his *matériel*—quickly and skilfully using his partially freed hands, he succeeded in the first part of his attempt; when holding over the light the bonds which confined his wrists, he sat, partially feeding the flame, until the stout cords gave way. His hands thus free, he waved them in triumph and thanksgiving towards the star still shining brightly upon him; and in an incredibly short space of time he, by similar process, freed his feet from bondage, though not without some suffering from the flames. As the last turn of the lashing was unwound, he sprung from the floor, and attempted to stand erect, but the cramped trembling joints failed to support him, and he fell back powerless upon his straw; by degrees, however, he restored the circulation to his benumbed and sore-scorched limbs, until they once more became capable of their wonted exertion.

As the night advanced he boldly proceeded in his plan. First, tearing down a large portion of the tapestry, he passed his hands along the walls of his prison; on three sides his views were opposed by solid stone; the fourth he discovered, with confirmed hope, to be of stout wainscot. But whither did the next room beyond lead to? or by whom might it now be occupied? Could nature support the dense smoke that must attend his attempt to burn a passage through here, for the escape of which smoke not an outlet existed, excepting the window high overhead, any effort to break which would alarm the yet wakeful inhabitants of the castell, before his purpose could be half-effected. Then came the more horrid suggestion, might he not, ere the stout oak gave way before the flames, himself perish miserably, tortured by a vain dream of freedom, while his limbs withered within the folds of the terrible agent whose aid he was about to invoke. These, and a thousand

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other fearful imaginings, swept through the prisoner's mind, as he busily collected a portion of his straw, together with some of the dry and mouldering tapestry, so as to form a heap of combustibles immediately beneath the wainscot.

Thus prepared, ere he applied the light, he again fixed his eyes upon the window, as if he expected from the star of his wild faith some evident and visible sign to direct him. He now looked in vain; the star shone no longer upon him. For a moment a shade of doubt clouded his brow, ere he interpreted this change: then bending low his head he cried—

"Thou art gone: thou wilt no longer let thy free rays linger within these thrice-accursed walls of stone—thou art gone, to light up the dark mountain and the silver stream, and thou callest on thy son to follow thy free course, or die;—ever-blessed star of my fathers, be thou obeyed!"

As he concluded, he again bowed low his head with a solemn earnestness of voice and manner, that fully bespoke his ardent faith in the strange creed he held.

He touched with his light a selected portion of the straw, and the flame rose fiercely against the sturdy wainscot, that seemed in its strength to defy the puny effort.

The Zingaro patiently sat crouching upon his hams, and from time to time carefully fed the slow fire, which, by degrees, gave certain evidence of its subtle and insidious power upon the surface of the blistering, blackened oak.

A little while longer, and the wainscot began itself to assist in its own destruction: the bluish flame that at first had but flickered for a moment, unsteadily and by fits upon its surface, seemed all at once to fix its hold with a tenacity not to be again shook off, and in a moment after, it rushed in fierce triumph over the hissing wood.

The smoke became dense, even to suffocation: nevertheless, stretched at full length, with his face close to the floor, the Zingaro continued for a long time to

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endure this suffering, as he carefully fed and directed the flames, which, to his hopes, gave promise of freedom; but at length the heat and smoke combined might no longer be borne with life. Thus made reckless of the consequences, he suddenly started up, and seizing the vessel which contained his supply of water, he aimed it against the lofty window; the immediate shiver of falling glass which followed bespoke the success of his effort, while the huge mass of smoke, lifting itself quickly upwards, left the floor comparatively free for breathing.

The dangerous consequences which had made him so long defer this movement, as he foresaw, almost immediately followed. First was heard the buzz of many mingled voices, gathering in the court below, to mark the thick smoke as it rolled through the broken window; then followed an eager cry for the keys of the tapestried chamber. Not an instant was to be lost; and no sooner did the prisoner hear these sounds, than gathering together the stout cords which had bound his feet and hands, he with their aid firmly secured the door inside; a work barely accomplished before he heard the quick tread of feet, and the hasty withdrawing of bolts; the heavy lock next turned in its wards, and an attempt was made to thrust open the door.

"Santa Maria! 'tis fast within!" cried a voice the prisoner recognised for Nicola's: "'tis the body of the poor Zingaro, doubtless, that has fallen against it—push stoutly, together, lads"—but the door again withstood their united efforts. "Get axe and hammer quickly, some of you," continued Nicola; "the fire is certainly here; 'twas never a spark from my lamp surely when I took the lad his supper. Ring out the great bell; call up my lord, the baron, or he will be burned in his bed else, like the poor *heathen* within, whose flesh I can plainly hear sputtering like chestnuts a-roasting."

A succession of sturdy blows rebounded from the entrance, and immediately the Zingaro tried with his foot to force the crackling wainscot, but it refused to

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give way. How to gain more time? already the door was rent from its hinges and had been down, but that the assailants had retreated from the first burst of smoke, calling loudly for water.

The Zingaro saw at once that now or never came the decisive moment—gathering therefore the remainder of his straw and other fuel, he quickly heaped it before the forced door, and just as this was falling inwards, he flung a blazing mass upon the ready pile—a wall of fire in an instant supplied the place of the barrier just beaten down, and the terrified water-bearers ran from the spot, with cries of horror, as they caught a glimpse of the dark form beyond, which appeared to move calmly and untouched amid the blaze.

In a few moments the fallen door began to add fresh fuel to the fire; the great bell, too, rung out the awful sound of flame. Drunk with the smoke, and maddened with the pain of his half-burned hands, the Zingaro also prepared for his last desperate effort. He covered his head and shoulders with thickened folds of his capa, retired a few paces from the now smouldering wainscot, then, rousing his whole force for the attempt he rushed forward and dashed himself sideways against it. The half-burned boards burst before his weight, and, whelmed amid the blazing ruin, he rolled into the next apartment.

Shaking the burning embers from about him, he hurried across the unoccupied and unfurnished room, and opening the door, entered the passage beyond. On the instant a voice arrested his step:

"Who art thou?" demanded a man, advancing hastily from an adjoining door, holding high a lamp,—"why am I thus rudely aroused, and whence this peal of wild alarm?" The Zingaro turned upon the inquirer, and the light flashed upon his face. Had the master-fiend himself, clothed in all his terrors, met Mirialva's sight —for he was the speaker—he could not have looked more dismayed than he now did, as he gazed upon his late prisoner, blackened with smoke, and with garments glowing from the sparks of fire which still clung to them.

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"What demon art *thou?*" again demanded the baron, as he stepped back towards the nearly closed door of the room just left by his sentenced prisoner, "speak!"

Demoniac indeed was the look the gipsy cast upon his proud foe, as with a voice of thunder he shouted,

"*Lo Zingaro!*" Then bounding forward with a tiger-spring he dashed the bewildered baron into the apartment already half-filled with flames, and closing the door, quickly drew the bolts. He then turned into Mirialva's now vacant bedchamber, tore from the sumptuous couch and windows the silken cords which draped the curtains, and by their aid descended with speed and safety into the private garden of the castello.

Already flames were bursting from the closely barred windows of the room which held the wretched Mirialva. The Zingaro paused for a moment and looked upwards—a wild scream for "help!" burst upon his ear—a roar of curses and loud laughter followed. This last was the domestics in the gallery, who thus mocked what they took for the cries of the suffering Zingaro. A yet wilder and more piercing cry of agony again filled the air—and again was it echoed by fresh yells of savage mockery.

"Ha!" exclaimed the listener, "these shrieks should have been *mine*, and such the laughter that would have greeted *my* agonies! Ha, ha, ha! roar on, ye accursed; let your shouts of joy ring in the ears of your unheeded, burning lord: and may the fiends of Eblis redouble your cries, as his black soul is hurled amid their eternal fires!"

Dashing the hot sweat from his scathed brow, the gipsy made for the olive-grove, and with great difficulty held his way, until, exhausted, he sunk upon the welcome margin of the calm waters of *Gli Fonti D'Amore.*

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CHAPTER IV.

On a gentle eminence, at the foot of the Vomero, stood the palace of the Conradini, in the midst of luxuriant vineyards, and immediately encircled by a private garden of some extent, beautifully laid out, and evincing a more careful superintendence than is usually bestowed in Italy upon such preserves. For in this favoured climate nature has showered so generally on every verdant spot her beauties of tree and flower, that the wealthy have little inducement to enclose for private luxury exotics which may be enjoyed by the meanest serf who cultivates his native fields.

To the palace of his ancestors, the Conte Luigi had at once borne his youthful bride, for such he had legally made her. Fast as the church could bind them, they were now one; and although his father would not become a party to an unworthy bargain to obtain a daughter-in-law, he was not in his heart sorry to find that the happiness of his son was secured without such a compromise; and although Luigi's attempt would, had it been known to him, have been met by his fixed opposition, the die being fairly cast, he received his son with forgiveness, and his new-made daughter with a cordial welcome and a father's blessing.

Letters were immediately despatched to the Baron di Mirialva, to suggest to him the necessity of fulfilling the contract entered into by his deceased brother, or otherwise preparing to abide the king's judgment and probable displeasure; for to the foot of the throne, immediately upon a refusal, Conradini resolved to bear the claims of his son, and appeal to the justice of his sovereign.

The messenger despatched with the above demand had now been absent the full time necessary for his

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journey, and hourly expecting his arrival, the Conte Luigi and his bride sat beneath a veranda that commanded an ample view of the lovely bay.

The moon was slowly rising in her fullest majesty, and had already silvered with her light the edges of the lofty cliffs, rising high over the picturesque Castel d'Ovo, which was itself lost in their deep shadows. The classic isles beyond just showed in the extreme distance like globes of silver floating on the dark bosom of the glassy sea. Not far removed might be heard the cries of the fishermen, as they hauled their boats above the reach of the waters, accompanied by the hoarse low roar of the surf, rolling in round the long-continued line of beach. Nearer the palace all was thrown into deep shadow by the stately silver pines, which, planted in thick rows, covered it in front, like a noble guard, while many clumps of sweetly-scented shrubs were made to encroach to within a few paces of the window where sat the lovers.

Constanza listened with a charmed ear to her lord, as he pointed out the various beauties of the scene, with all the enthusiasm of a poet, and with the love of a patriot for his native Naples.

"But the night air is freshening, and you, love, must be wearied with my legends of the past glories of Naples, and of imperial Capri and its horrors. They are twice dear to me, for they are associated with my every childish joy and sorrow. They first stole on my wondering eager ears, in all the exaggerated detail of my good old nurse, and were, in after-days, made the reward of well-doing, as on this very spot they were described in the grandeur of simple history, made still more noble by the glowing eloquence of my aged preceptor, the excellent Carlo Mattei. Come, we will enter the apartment—see, the lamps are already lighted: come, and you shall shame my tediousness by playing one of those wild mountain-airs we have so often sung together, as we sauntered through your sweet valley of Salmona."

"Ah!" said Constanza, with a sigh, as the recollec-

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tion of her own birthplace rose fresh upon her memory, "loved valley! shall I ever again behold thee? ever again wander by those clear waters, where I have so often bounded on the light foot of childhood?"

"And in the young days of our love, too," whispered Luigi. "Oh, fear not, dearest; your uncle will scarce dare abide the sovereign's command, which he knows must follow my father's appeal. He will yield to strong necessity, doubt not; and soon again shall you sit in the antique hall of your castello, and sing to me the country's gentle songs in praise of love's own poet and Salmona's pride."

Together they now entered the apartment, throwing wide the casement, which opened to the ground. Constanza seated herself opposite to it, and in a tone of anxious melancholy, continued:—

"I know not, my Luigi, what so oppresses me, but my heart is ever and anon seized with a throbbing which threatens even to burst it: my mind, too, has been all this day filled with dismal fancies."

"What can chill thee thus?" answered the conte, as he fondly pressed with his lips her marble brow. "Thou art happy, my own Constanza?"

Beaming with tenderness, she fixed her gazelle-like eyes upon her lord, as she replied—

"Happy! Luigi, am I not with thee? Am I not thine own Constanza? But would that this tardy courier were returned; you know not the fierce nature of Carlette di Mirialva. When I reflect on his hatred, on his daring, on his vengeance—oh! Luigi, can I speak it? but at this hour your life is perhaps only held at the will of the most profligate, the most reckless of men."

"Tush, tush! this is indeed wild dreaming: [illegible] do you think Mirialva has no fears for him[illegible] what, well he knows my father's vigour, [illegible] self? Too power, to tempt, by any evil wr[illegible] and our house's assured destruction. I w[illegible] ught on me, his own tain of the safety of [illegible] uld I were but half as cerfear me, was a[illegible] my poor Zingaro ally; but he, I very hour [illegible] owed brief law, I would give, this [illegible] ne best horse, hound, and hawk I own to

save him from jeopardy, and that is higher pricing than was ever before put on him or any of his kind."

"They are indeed a wayward, but also a sore-suffering race," replied Constanza: "but if ever I am again restored to the seat of my fathers, you, Luigi, must look to their better ordering, even for the sake of him who read my fortune by the springs of *Gli Fonti D'Amore*."

"And died to have that fortune fairly sped," added the conte. "Even the lynx may be tamed to love, and I will waste some kindness on that rude race, but I will mend their sad condition, even for his sake who helped me to the sweetest bride Salmona ever saw, or Ovid sung; that is, provided she belie her sex and change not."

A look of love and pride beamed from the eyes of Constanza, as, striking her lyre, she prettily echoed the word "*change*," and sang—

"For ever thine this heart—
Feel how it beats for thee,
And while it beats, this heart of mine
Will answer every throb of thine
With truest sympathy;
Thine, thine, alone!

For ever thine this heart—
All else may change, and be;
But this, thy heart, no change can own,
For thee it beats, for thee alone,
And breaks, cast off by thee;
Thine, thine, alone!

For ever thine this heart—
All else beneath the skies,
The grass, the flower, earth, air, and sea,
May pass away, again to be;
The heart—for ever dies—
Thine, thine, alone!

The conte rose in delight from his lady's feet, where he had thrown himself to listen to her melody; the [illegible]nes of her sweet voice had not yet melted into last to[illegible]n a slight movement was heard at the the air whe[illegible]ds, "Die, coward and fool!" were window—the wo[illegible]r and piercing, though hardly articulated, in tones cle[illegible] deep groan and a heavy uttered above the breath; one[illegible] before. fall followed—and all was silent as[illegible] to the window,

The conte started, and passed hastily [illegible]

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close to which he at once observed the body of the fallen man. He stooped over the form; he pressed his hand upon the heart; but it beat no more; life had fled with the last sound. He was just opening his lips to call for aid, when a low hiss, issuing from the thick clump of shrubs close in his front, caused him to raise his head. What was his surprise, when full in the light of the moonbeam, with head uncovered, he beheld the well-remembered features of the Zingaro!

"Ha!" exclaimed the conte, "thou alive, and here! How means all this? speak!"

"Pianissimo, signor mio," whispered the gipsy; "it is ill speaking too loud of a death done where one's confession may be overheard by more than the priest. But fear nothing now: first assure thy lady's silence; for, if you remember, my face was not altogether after her liking when last she saw it, and I promise you it is not much improved in comeliness since; a cry from her lips now might peril me to the full as much as it did before; and by my life I have no mind for another such adventure."

The Conte Luigi turned into the chamber, where Constanza sat as if spellbound: she had heard the groan, had seen her husband's movement towards the sound, but at that moment her over-excited nerves failed beneath the shock, and she remained without the power of speech or motion.

"Be no longer alarmed, dearest Constanza," murmured the conte, trying to reassure his gentle wife; "'tis nothing; only a faithful varlet, who is now without, and whose appearance hitherto has ever been to us a harbinger of joy. Come, cheer thee to hear the marvel of his coming; perchance thy uncle has relented, and so released this trusty knave as a true pledge of his wish to conciliate."

"Trust not, oh! trust not to the baron," exclaimed Constanza, wildly, drawing the conte nearer to her; "for there is danger, my husband, and the presence of the Zingaro speaks it. That fearful groan too! Oh! said I not my soul foreboded evil? Luigi, rely not too

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firmly on the faith of this strange being; many and fearful are the tales told of his people's treachery, and few and bold are they who place deep trust in them."

"Nay, be not unmindful of his true service, love. Remember, I owe to it all my present joys, and even those joys I'd freely pledge upon his faith: be not alarmed, and he shall himself speak out his errand." Luigi beckoned the Zingaro to advance: with a glance of bitter scorn, he planted his foot upon the corpse stretched in his way, and at once stepped into the apartment. Constanza shrunk within herself, as doubtingly she gazed upon his features. He was, in truth, much changed; his face and neck were in many places disfigured by blotches of deep red, these contrasted but ill with its natural hue: his once luxuriant hair, too, was almost gone; in some places it was shorn quite close to the blackened scalp, while here and there a stray lock remained, no longer flowing gracefully as before, but shrivelled and bristling from his head. His eye alone retained its native lustre, and bespoke that, though all without was altered, the ardent soul within still remained unchanged.

Bending low to the lady, he calmly stood as if waiting question.

"When," demanded the conte, "didst thou leave the Castell di Mirialva?"

"On the eve of your past Sabbath."

"By good leave, or—"

"Even by the way you entered it—the window; no bad way either, when a man needs more haste than help."

"How! You escaped from durance, then, and without the baron's knowledge!"

"Not so, either, signor; the baron learned, though somewhat at the latest, I was about to quit his hospitable keeping."

"Thou speakest somewhat in riddles, Zingaro. I have a courier despatched to the baron: knowest thou his present humour—how will my servant find him?"

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"He may not well find *him*, conte, without first quitting your service."

"How so?"

"Because he whom he seeks no longer lives."

"Ha!"—Constanza sprung from the couch—"my uncle dead!"

"Start not, lady," coolly replied the Zingaro, "and speak not over-loud, for I stay not your questioning on roses. In brief, you are now, thanks to my fortune, once more in safety; may return to your fair domain, and live free and fearless, for your worst enemy is no more; he has died the death that best may fit him for the after-life. He was burnt!—burnt within that very house he held from his brother's child: he was swept from life planning the misery of her to whom he should have proved a sworn protector."

"Merciful God, assoilze his soul!" fervently prayed Constanza.

"The fire was accidental?" demanded the conte, closely regarding the man as he spoke. He smiled grimly as, lowering his voice, he answered with fearful earnestness,—

"The flames were lighted by me, to aid my escape from bondage and from certain death. What! did the slaves think to keep the falcon and not hood his eyes? Did they leave to the Zingaro one glimpse of the clear light of heaven, and look to have him yield without a struggle the life that light made dear?

"Scourged like a hound, till my very bones lay bared to their lewd mockery, I was bound and thrown aside to wait till their pleasure served to hang me. Was I to bide their coming? No! I fired the detested den that held me, and broke once more to freedom from its blazing ruins as they crumbled round me.

"Thus at liberty, I had, perchance, contented me with my escape, but the ill spirit of the baron threw him in that wild moment across my way. Smarting from the fire I scarce had hoped to live through, I saw my pain, my hopes made by his presence in an instant void, and fresh tortures again awaiting me. One instant

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effort promised both safety and revenge. I boldly, madly made the venture. Behold! I am safe—I am revenged. Even now his shriek from that mouldering chamber of death sounds again in my ear, and more than answers all my sufferings. He is no more! and you, Conte Luigi, are now free to live.

"Return to your castello, lady; 'tis little the worse for the airing I have given it. I read you fair fortune, and you have found it; may it ever bide with you! Signor, I owed you a *life*; we are now freely quitted, for I have saved you this night from as sudden an ending as awaited me that day when the hunter's belt was drawn round my throat in the forest of Venafro."

"How! my life—mean you that?"

"Look on this carrion," continued the Zingaro, as he turned over the body of the slain man with his foot; "stoop down, and know that evil face."

It was the countenance of Jocope, for many years the porter of the Castell di Mirialva."

"What!" said Luigi, "would this man have struck the husband of his old master's child?"

"*He!*" interrupted the Zingaro, "he would have struck the husband of the mother that bore him for half the price set upon your head. On my escape I sought out this traitor, and caught him grovelling on a wrong scent. Unseen and unsuspected I soon found means to set him right: once well laid on the track I knew he'd stick to it."

"What!" cried Constanza, shuddering, "you guided him the way to *murder?*"

"Truly, lady, I left him not unguided; for from that hour I slept when he slept, and when he rose I rose; I breathed as he breathed, moved as he moved: we had but one shadow in the sun; but he dreamed not of this: full surely I *guided* him, even to his purpose and his end. He was blinded to my wish by the promised gold; it ever glittered before his eyes, and he saw no other object. But it is passed, and behold where he lies! Mark, signor, his hand is on the lock of the petronel whose report was to have pronounced you a

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corpse, and him master of a thousand ducats. I watched his serpent-crawl to this very spot; I saw the felon-sparkle of his eye; I heard the short panting of his bated breath, and marked his deadly aim; but me he saw not, heard not, till he felt my blow."

"Heavens!" cried Constanza, "an instant later and the murder had been done."

The Zingaro smiled. "No, lady, think not I rested upon less than surety—his trusty petronel a truer friend of mine had rendered harmless. Blindly he incurred the penalty without the chance of murder."

"Strange being," inquired the conte, "why not have informed me of my danger, and left his punishment to justice?"

"What! would justice better have revenged my stripes than my own right hand has done? That one blow struck, I am again a man, and the mark of the lash will be no longer my shame. From my mother's breast, until the dark hour, but one hand ever inflicted disgrace on my free body—*this* hand it was."

He let the lifeless limb which he had grasped fall upon the path, and contemptuously gazed upon it.

"But why," said the count, "when you knew his purpose, why let him proceed so near to the fulfilment of his bloody errand?"

"Ha, ha! Conte Luigi, think you his mere death could appease my vengeance? No! I am well learned, that by the creed you hold crime once determined on is dealt with by *your* God as crime already done. Look there!—read the resolve to murder stamped upon his brow. Even with his last thought upon the bloody act, the damning wish recorded on his heart, the instrument of death, too, in his hand, I smote him! and, without one prayer for mercy, his soul is gone to its eternal account. Like his gratitude is also the vengeance of lo Zingaro—*senza limito!* But hark! I hear approaching footsteps."

He now gave a long, sharp hiss—a young female was in an instant by his side.

"Zea," he said, "there stands the man for whom

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you have laboured; the only man who ever saved or spared any of our race. Thank him quickly, and let us begone to the mountain."

The girl advanced to the conte, and taking his hand, she pressed it with reverence to her forehead, while her eloquent look spoke volumes of thanksgiving.

"Allow me a few minutes' law ere you have this foul carcass stirred," said the Zingaro; "for I would ill like further questioning. Nay, shudder not, lady," he added, "think upon my wild nature, and my cruel suffering. *Farewell!*"

The Zingaro and the maiden together disappeared as the attendant announced to the conte the return of his belated courier.

First requesting his father's presence, Luigi admitted the man, and from his lips heard the story of the Zingaro confirmed. He told how he had witnessed the removal of the blackened remains of the baron from the ruins of the still reeking chamber!—the fire, he said, had been promptly got under, and, indeed, extended little beyond the immediate suite of apartments where it first broke out.

He told, too, strange stories of the Zingaro, of his having spirited the poor baron to change places with him, through the Devil's aid, whom some of the attendants swore they saw personally engaged in feeding the flames, and at last take to flight through the broken casement, bearing the Zingaro on his huge wing, and leaving the spellbound baron to abide the fiery penalty.

On the man's being dismissed to entertain his awe-stricken fellows with these marvels, the conte imparted to his father the true but strange story of his preservation. The proper authorities were promptly assembled, and the necessary forms gone through; but as every evidence went to prove the purpose of the dead emissary of Mirialva, the conte was at once honourably installed, by the royal consent, in all the honours and wide domains of his fair runaway. Large rewards were offered for the apprehension of the incendiary, and orders

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issued to clear the Abruzzo of the outlaw Zingari with fire and sword; but as the execution of these orders rested with the new baron, they were very differently interpreted.

CHAPTER V.

A TWELVEMONTH had passed away, and many mingled sounds of song and dance, and the light laugh of unrestrained glee, echoed round the old towers of the Castell di Miralva; gay banners fluttered in the mountain-breeze from the lofty battlements, and the hillside swarmed with merry groups of peasants, who were eagerly watching the approach of a distant cavalcade, impatient to hail the first-born of their liege lady, the heir of the Conradini.

It was the anniversary of the festival of the Annunziata, and chosen by Constanza for the day that was to give the mother church one other member in her new-born son.

"I choose this day," said Constanza to her lord; "for it was on this day I met the mendicant palmer in the church of the Annunziata; but, though I love right well the gentle name of Luigi, yet shall this boy be called *Ovidio*, in remembrance of the spot where I staid to list my fair fortune."

The lady had her will, and it was her return from the convent the assembled vassals so eagerly abided. As the gay cortège approached the foot of the hill, Constanza turned her palfrey from the side of her infant's litter, and, calling to her lord to follow, gayly galloped over the yielding sward towards *Gli Fonti d'Amore*.

Together they reined up upon its margin; Constanza fondly pressed the hand of Luigi, and pointing to the rich olives whose branches swept the waters, she told how upon that spot her startled eye first rested on the

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dark form of the Zingaro. She waved her hand to hasten some of the approaching guests, when a female advanced from the thick shade of the trees, and, laying her finger impressively on her lip, motioned the conte to be gone, glancing at the same time upwards amid the branches. Following the direction of her look, the conte caught sight of the dark visage of the Zingaro, with finger on lip, just visible for an instant through the thick foliage. On this, whispering his discovery to Constanza, they quickly turned together and stayed the advance of their gentle followers. Loud shouts from the hill, at the same moment, bespoke the reception of Mirialva's future lord amid his happy vassals.

"Let us hasten to thank the honest knaves," said the conte, and in a moment quickly bounded each steed onward towards the castello.

The day was devoted to sumptuous festivity. At length the sounds of revelry were hushed; the banqueters, wearied with the fulness of their joys, were buried in profound repose. In the silence of their chamber, the conte and his fair wife, at length left alone, marvelled on their strange vision of that morning; for from the time he bade them farewell in the palace of the Conradini, no word of the eagerly sought Zingaro had reached their ears. The fond mother bent above the couch of her sleeping boy, and loudly prayed all evil might be averted from his innocent head, when—"Hark!"—the soft notes of music rose through the air. Imagining it to be a gallant device of their guests, or some rustic serenade, the conte and lady left their chamber, and advanced to that very window whence, twelve months before, they had so fearfully descended.

The night was close and calm, and the casement stood open to court the lazy air. Looking out to greet the serenaders, they recognised at once, standing in the shade below, the figures of the Zingaro and the dark young maiden. She was seated on the rude bench at the foot of the tower; before her lay a huge hound of the mountain breed, and by her side stood her com-

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panion, his rude guitar in his hand. The count was about to address them, but motioning for silence, the Zingaro spoke in a low tone to the girl—

"Sing, Zea, sing to them the song of joy, made more welcome from thy lips; sing to them the song of our last parting."

He pointed impressively towards the distant horizon's edge, and then softly swept the strings of his guitar, while, raising her dark eyes towards Constanza, the maiden obeyed, and sang the

PROPHECY.

"Lady, look from thy bower on high,
Look on yonder western sky,
Look o'er tree, o'er tower, and fountain,
Where the silver cloud sits on the mountain.

Look, lady, look, and mark the star,
Beaming so lightly from afar;
That star is a herald bearing joy
To thee and thy sleeping cherub boy.

I mark'd the day, I watch'd the hour,
I've read its errand, know its power;
It bears to that boy who cradled lies
All of good beneath the skies.

Success in love, in peace, in war,
High fame, and honour brings yon star;
Happy mother, now rest thee well,
His fortune's read! Farewell—farewell!"

Never again did the wild form of lo Zingaro cross the path of the Conradini, nor ever after this hour did the plaintive melody of his guitar awake the night.

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EISENBACH;

OR,

THE ADVENTURES OF A STRANGER.

A METROPOLITAN STORY.

BY ANDREW PICKEN.

Marriage is a matter of more worth
Than to be dealt in by attorneyship.
SHAKSPEARE.

CHAPTER I.

THE road from Kreuznach, or rather from Munster, towards the picturesque town of Bingen on the Rhine, is so beautiful, and the distance between the two latter places so short, that by the time I had got to that point in my journey, I determined to travel it on foot, and by myself, for no other reason that I can tell but because I wished to refresh my limbs by a walk, and had taken a conceited fancy for my own company.

Before I had arrived at the end of my day's excursion, however, I found that I had quite enough both of the one and the other; for though my "weary legs" did not actually break down, my head began positively to ache from the fervour of my own meditations, excited as they had been all day by the beauty of the scenery through which I had been passing; and I found that personal solitude, even in the noble valley of the Nah, becomes wearisome at length to a man of colloquial

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propensities. Besides, I had been quite misinformed regarding the real charms of these parts, and as I mounted the pass of the Ruchesberg, near the chapel of Saint Roch, which overlooks the whole sweep of the valley, and which gave me the Rhine gleaming beneath me, up and down on the right—the quaint turrets of Bingen in the hollow reflected in its bosom, and the noble mountain of the Rudesheim in front of me as I contemplated the view across the valley,—I became so lost in poetry and other nonsense, that I quite forgot myself as usual, until common hunger and exhaustion began to remind me once more of the weakness of humanity.

I would not, however, as I descended the mountain, lose the last lowering glance of the sinking sun, which now deepened the black shadows of the rocky hills that skirted the horizon beyond the valley—and that lightened the bright green of the vineyards with which they were clothed, and reddened the picturesque summit of the Rudesheim beyond—for I hoped, that could I only reach Bingen this evening, I should there find some English people who would do me great civility for my money, and supply my lack of the Allemand language, by wholesome talk which I could reciprocate. But man is short-sighted, and so forth; a philosophical reflection which I found particularly pertinent to this present occasion—for by the time I had descended towards the lower grounds, the shadows of evening began to prevail to the eastward, the Rhine, and the town in front of me seemed to recede away every step I took, and I was inclined to misdoubt whether I was not making a circle round the mountain, instead of proceeding mathematically to any Christian habitation. The usual troubles of a strayed traveller journeying in foreign lands now overtook me, and perplexed my thoughts exceedingly. Fancies drear crowded into my brain like the hollow wind that now began to moan in the distance, and to whisper strange words in my ears, while a certain exhausted receiver that I carried about with me seemed to yawn discontentedly, like the deep chasms that now grew dark among the surrounding valleys.

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Philosophy, however, came again kindly to my aid, reminding me in the plenitude of its wisdom that I had no money wherewith to render me a worthy subject of any creditable robbery; that moreover, the Germans were an exceedingly honest people, and that, according to natural history, even the vultures and crows of those parts were of a kindly nature, and could not have the heart to pick out my eyes, even if, like a Bethlehem shepherd, I should be obliged to lie in the fields all night.

While preparing my mind for the worst that might happen, in this judicious and sensible manner, I found myself mounting a height on the borders of another small valley. The light seemed now again to brighten a little, and by it I perceived, peeping from among the woodland above me, the white turrets of a small mansion, or rather villa, which came by degrees into view from among the planting, and appeared to me at once, as in some way quite different from the usual dwellings in this part of Germany. The road soon passed within a few hundred yards of this house, the valley below swept up enchantingly among the mountains, the stream at the bottom turned into a little lake in the distance, and the white houses of a small hamlet studded with a lively effect the side of the hill on the opposite side of the hollow.

I was speculating within myself whether the tasteful little property beside me could belong to a native, when I heard a footstep pattering among the planting near, and the voice of a child to my astonishment cry out in English, "O! papa, here is a stranger going past, and I am sure he is an Englishman, for he wears such a pretty cap: do ask him in."

A fair-faced and exceedingly gentleman-like young man now came in view from among the shrubbery by the road, and observing me, seemed for an instant to hesitate whether or not he should address me. I put an end to his doubt by speaking first, and in English, and was agreeably surprised not only by an answer in the same tongue as I hoped for, but by an expression of congratulation at meeting me, and a warm invitation

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to accept of the hospitality of his house. Nothing could have been more opportune at the moment. I accepted of his kindness with real joy, and in five minutes after was comfortably seated in a handsome parlour, so fitted up and furnished, that I almost imagined myself on the banks of the Thames or the Severn.

A slight German accent was all that distinguished my host from an Englishman—and when here on the frontier of Germany he began to ask me of the news from London, and to talk of persons and places with which I was familiar at home, I was almost as much delighted as his little daughter by his knee, who absolutely jumped with joy at hearing my English speech.

"I will not hear a word of apology, my good sir," he said, "and if you can submit to plain fare, here you will be pleased to take up your quarters for the night, —for my wife is from home; I am, as you see, left alone with my little daughter—so the gratification from this chance-visit of a condescending stranger is all on my side," and he finished his simple invitation by ordering in fruit and refreshments, with several varieties of that delicious Rhenish, that, drank among the valleys where it grows, is so grateful to the palate of the exhausted traveller.

"It is not wonderful that I am happy to see an Englishman, sir," he continued; "my recollections of your country are most interesting," and he looked in the pretty intelligent face of his child.

"Your lady is an Englishwoman, sir," I said, evincing my usual penetration.

"She is, sir,—how happy she will be to see you, if you will do me the honour to be my guest till she return! She has left me for the night for a work of kindness at the bedside of a sick friend; for we have friends here, and she loves them too, it being my wife's nature to love the good wherever she meets them. Excuse my egotism, sir, when I speak of her."

"And your little daughter is her image, I dare say," I ventured to observe, as I again contemplated with

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pleasure the pure English features of the beautiful child, so different from the general plainness of the females of these parts.

The young man gazed on the smiling girl. I seemed to have touched the chord of that deep German feeling which belongs to the inhabitants of these valleys.—"She is her mother's image," he said; and as he clasped her convulsively in his arms, I turned my head away, that I might not seem to pry into the genuine emotion of the happy parent.

"And yet," he added, "I can scarcely call myself a German; still less am I an Englishman. In truth, I have all my life been but a child of chance, if you will allow so unphilosophical a term. Chance made me a stranger wandering the world for many years. Chance took me to England. Chance procured me friends there, as it has your society this evening. Chance has made me a happy man, while it might have made me miserable. But Providence is the better word and the truer, and I am fortunate and thankful."

I was positively interested by the conversation and manner of my host, and began to think myself quite favoured in meeting with him, particularly here, finding he had lived in England.

"But you are not to suppose," he afterward said, "that I saw nothing but beauty and virtue in London. In the chances of my stay in that capital there came in my way the usual persons and characteristics which draw often such contrasts into life—which mix its incidents, or which, like sounds of painful discord, succeed each other with such grating effect upon the tympanum of experience. I saw, of course, virtue for a time in the grasp or the toils of guilt—gentleness of spirit harassed or alarmed by unfeeling grossness. Along with many better things I saw weakness and waywardness making up the sum of human impulses—chance and desert working out the sum of human life."

With the jealousy of all enthusiasm, and the matter-of-fact way of thinking attributed to my countrymen, I could not help smiling at this speech of my new friend;

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yet I love a little moralizing when it does not take any high-sounding name; and now thought it suitable enough in a conversation about England with a stranger on the banks of the Rhine. The more I had of my host's company the more I became interested concerning him. In the course of the evening the hints that dropped from him regarding certain occurrences which befell him in London excited my curiosity, as they seemed to allude to some circumstances of which I had formerly heard, but with a vagueness and misapprehension which were exceedingly unsatisfactory.

On the following day, therefore, I with little difficulty persuaded him to narrate to me the details of his story, or rather of that part of it which related to his sojourn in England. It will speak for itself both as to his character and the occurrences in question. The following may be taken as nearly his own words:—

I had no sooner set foot in England—began my host—than chance threw in my way persons and incidents which unaccountably interested me, as if by an involuntary presentiment that both were in some way to become accessory to events in which I was myself to be concerned. On my landing at Dover, having a few hours to spend there, I did not, like the usual rabble of strangers, climb up the cliffs or lounge about the ramparts of the castle, but sat down quietly at the window of my inn, looking out at nothing at all unless it might be at the passengers in the street, who did not indeed appear to be particularly worth contemplating. Never, however, had I on former occasions tried this plan of seeming idleness for any length of time in a strange place, but something fell in my way that more or less fastened on my mind, and became a nucleus for future observation.

Casting my eyes down a narrow lane or passage nearly opposite to the window where I sat I observed a gentleman walking backwards and forwards alone, evidently in much anxiety or agitation, or as if he waited for something with the greatest impatience. His bear-

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ing and manner fixed my attention on him, but being near-sighted I could not then obtain a proper view of his face. Presently a servant came hastily up the lane, and whispered something in the gentleman's ear. He drew back his head as if in surprise at the intelligence, smiled with an air of aristocratical hauteur, yet spoke with a condescending manner to the man, as he seemed to give him some directions, and while doing so evidently casting his eye towards the place where I sat. They then separated, and I observed the servant cross the street, and at once enter my hotel, while the gentleman from whom he had parted slowly walked off up the lane.

In two minutes after my own room-door opened, and the landlord of the inn himself came bowing towards me.

"I am going to ask a particular favour of you, sir," said he; "I hope you will not be offended."

"Say on, if you please."

"That you will oblige me by moving to the apartments below, only for this day, as this sitting-room is particularly required."

"You gave it up to me not an hour ago," I said, —"besides, the apartment below is a common room—I cannot comply."

"You would very much oblige me, sir," added the landlord, "and a gentleman who—"

"I know not why I should give up the only place in your house where I can sit with comfort to any gentleman whom I do not know. If it was to accommodate a lady, then—"

"Probably there *may* be a lady, sir," said the servant whom I had just seen with the stranger—as he now stepped in behind the landlord. "Beg your pardon, sir," added the man, "but master sends his compliments, and is most anxious—"

"Pray who is your master?"

"I am not at liberty, sir,—my master's name is—is—"

"Never mind," said I, perceiving the fellow was

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about to give me a false name—"I will abandon the room," and I rose and walked down stairs.

Hating to enter the public room of a middling hotel, I preferred standing by the pillar at the door, particularly as I wished to have a look at the person who thus strangely had interested me, and turned me out of my apartment.

I lingered, however, nearly an hour without his again making his appearance, and was about returning to remonstrate with the landlord, when the same servant again entered the hotel, and instantly after a travelling-chariot drew up to the door. Two persons only were seated in it, one a sickly melancholy-looking gentleman, not, however, much beyond middle age; the other a lady, muffled up and veiled so that I could not see her face. They did not alight, but while the horses were watered and refreshed, the lady seemed endeavouring to persuade the sickly man to something to which he would not assent, and as I stepped a little aside I heard the sweet and tender tones of her voice remonstrating with him, while he answered her with a crabbed roughness and seeming contempt that made my heart bleed for her, whoever she might be.

On casting my eyes within the hall of the inn, I observed, to my astonishment, the servant of the strange gentleman making every effort, by looks and signs, to attract the observation of the lady in the chariot. She perceived him at length, and looked steadily towards him. In a minute after I saw her lift the edge of her veil, and looking upwards, fix her eyes upon the window at which I had just been sitting. What could this mean? for I had seen no one enter the house since I had left that room. Stepping across the way, however, I observed the black curled head of the gentleman whom I had seen in the lane, who had evidently entered the hotel by a back-door, and whose large and intelligent black eyes now seemed to seek those of the lady with the greatest anxiety. I would myself have given any thing to obtain a sight of her face, but could not, and only heard, as I again drew near, her soft pleading

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tones, and the tart and short replies with which they were greeted by the disagreeable person who sat beside her.

At length I saw the servant of the stranger and one of the waiters of the inn in close communication, and in a short time after, the latter, handing some fruit to the lady at the carriage window, slipped into her hand a small piece of paper, which he had concealed under a bunch of grapes. The nervous emotion with which she clutched the billet affected me, and made me almost ashamed of thus watching her; and as I turned to enter the hotel, the cross and piercing tones of her companion, blaming her, or uttering a crabbed malediction on the servant for thus delaying them, entered my very soul, as I am sure they did that of the poor female who was obliged to endure such behaviour. In an instant after the whip was laid to the horses, and I saw no more of this strange couple, and before another five minutes had passed, the landlord came bowing to where I stood, and with many apologies informed me that the apartment I had so obligingly given up was again at my service.

"And where is the strange gentleman?"

"He is gone, sir."

"When, or how?"

"From the court-gate behind, just this instant."

"Pray who is he?"

"I never inquire the name of my guests, sir; it is not my business; and I never even say, 'my lord,' or 'your grace,' in addressing those who honour my house with their custom, unless it may be a nobleman's pleasure to travel by his own title."

It is vexatious to have one's curiosity excited, and then to know nothing. "It will be very odd," said I to myself, "if the chances of life do not throw in my way some clew to this affair when I get to London." I little knew then how wide a place London is.

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CHAPTER II.

Upon my arrival in the capital I found myself for a considerable time, like other friendless persons, a lost man among the busy myriads of the English metropolis. Knowing no one, and unwilling to make any acquaintance with those who looked upon me with suspicion because I had no friends, I passed away my time in that weary solitude which has been so often felt in a great town by strangers like myself.

But though I went every where, and saw every thing that strangers see, and looked in every face that passed me, for want of something better to do, I never could set my eyes upon the remarkable man whom I had observed at Dover, and who, together with the lady, still continued to occupy my thoughts with an unaccountable curiosity. Why I should continue to concern my mind about them seemed odd even to myself; for as for the lady it was not possible that I should know her again, never having seen her face, and as for the gentleman, who had acted so mysteriously, I had seen him at such a distance and for so short a period, that it was doubtful if I should among the thousands of London be again able to identify his person. Yet I could not get either him or the seemingly ill-treated lady out of my head. I looked for them so eagerly in all public places, and my mind dwelt so much on the slight circumstance I have related, that for want probably of better employment, curiosity concerning them became almost a disease, and I would have given any thing to have had it gratified.

About a fortnight after my arrival in London, proceeding along one of the crowded streets in the west end on one of those fine days when all the beauty and fashion of the metropolis may be met out of doors, I observed

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a gentleman walking slowly before me, whose noble figure and elegance of dress were almost distinguishing even among the numbers of handsome men around me. Before I could pass him to obtain a look of his face, however, a servant with a led horse came hastily riding up. The gentleman mounted it, while I involuntarily watched him. Chancing to cast my eye towards the servant, I knew him at once to be the same that I had seen at Dover, and stepped hastily forward to get a proper sight of his master. It was in vain, however, that I even tried to catch the profile—the horse's head was turned round as he threw himself into the saddle, and putting spurs to the animal, he and the man were in an instant out of my sight.

A few days after this, while in a different part of the town, and happening at the time to be musing upon this very circumstance, my eye rested upon the figure of a lady, as, issuing from the door of a mansion, she crossed the flags to her carriage. As she passed before me and showed her ankle in ascending the steps, I noticed her only as one of those fine figures of women so often seen in this land of beauty; but looking carelessly at the carriage as I passed, the arms on it at once struck upon my recollection.—They were the very same as were on that carriage at Dover which contained persons who had so very much interested me. This *must* have been the lady—I strode forward to observe her face. The blinds, however, were drawn up in a moment. Crack went the coachman's whip, and in two minutes the vehicle was out of sight.

I now began to see the absurdity of this involuntary curiosity about persons whom I was never likely to meet, and determined to watch for them no more. For several weeks I succeeded in forgetting them, when, coming out of the Argyle Rooms one evening after a concert, I heard two ladies in the crowd whispering eagerly, and one say to the other, "Look—there—that is he!"

"Where?"

"Just beyond the fat lady."

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"Oh, I see him—what an elegant young man! But is it actually true?"

"I am convinced it is—but as yet it is a mere whisper."

I looked in the direction that the ladies pointed to, but I could only see a section of the face, yet I was certain it was the strange gentleman. I pushed forward, but the towering headdress of a tall woman came between me and the object, and, whatever way I turned my head, was sure to intercept my efforts for a look. I could not push past her without absolute rudeness, and before I was relieved from this annoyance the strange gentleman was completely lost in the crowd.

If there could be any excuse for such absurd curiosity, a lady only ought to have made it pardonable in a man—and as to her that was associated in it, I had never actually seen her, and never was likely to do so, in such a manner at least as to identify her with the object of my anxiety. But if the mind once employs itself long or frequently upon any one object, what that object may be is of no consequence as to the interest taken in it. All the sights and scenes of London were stale, flat, and insipid, compared to my obtaining authentic information regarding those three persons who had attracted and upheld my curiosity from the first hour of my arrival in England.

I soon began to find that my present state of mental solitude was not the best, and far from being the most safe for one of my character, for it gave me too much the habit of reading faces and catching impressions from them, which, as beauty was no rarity in London, might end in consequences very serious to my happiness. A thoughtful stranger wandering about the streets of the metropolis is naught else but a walking intellect—a moving reader of the world's book—a meditative unit of mind, which, giving out nothing, imbibes as it goes those impressions and observations upon which it afterward chews the cud of inference and reflection.

This was my case, and an escape from this brood-

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ing solitude I found the more necessary, as, in the course of my perambulations in public places, I had been much struck with two faces, one of which at least began to take firm hold of my fancy. It was that of a young female of about eighteen, one of those quiet but touching beauties which the eye cannot long contemplate without drawing in the heart, and which it involuntarily turns away from gazing upon, from an instinctive deference to the power of simple loveliness.

The other face was that of a man who had insinuated himself into my conversation one evening, when I met him among some foreigners at the Café de l'Europe, and which, at least in its indications and expression, was the very contrast of the touching sweetness and innocent beauty of the girl. He was a person of about forty—with a salacious, I should almost say swinish eye, a gluttonous if not dissipated look, and a patch of bald on the crown of a frowsy head. Although shrewd, and by no means wanting in intelligence, he was one of those brutish versions of humanity which a mind of any delicacy must instinctively hate. I was involuntarily impelled to abhor the character that this man's countenance predicated to be his. Yet one of those chance circumstances which often bring in contact persons the most dissimilar in their nature brought, for the most providential purposes, this coarse man and me into some intimacy. I afterward learned that his name was Compton, and that he was rich, and by profession a lawyer, and occasionally a money-lender.

Finding myself too solitary in an hotel or a private lodging, I determined, rather than live without society, to seek it by boarding with a respectable family. An advertisement in a newspaper soon procured me what I wanted. The house I was directed to was in a good street in the west. The apartments I liked. The landlady was smart, and a notable Englishwoman. Two other gentlemen, I was informed, were domiciled in the house. What was my surprise, on sitting down to the first dinner with the guests of this establishment, to find myself introduced to the Mr. Compton whom I have

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just mentioned! His very countenance deprived me at first of all appetite, and to add to my annoyance he drank wine with me all dinner, and attached himself to me as my particular friend. I determined to leave the house with all haste, but this determination was not so easily accomplished.

Meantime, though forswearing this constant reading of faces, I could not help going once more to the crowded drive in your Hyde Park, to obtain one other look of that beautiful, that fascinating countenance which had now almost become the delight of my existence. For a long time the sweet female did not appear, but just as I was about to leave the crowded spot, I perceived the plain and modest green chariot in which, accompanied by an elderly lady or gentleman, she usually rode. A chock of carriages stopped the line, and as theirs stood for a time, I observed a gentleman leaning over the rails and gazing on her. With the selfishness no doubt of jealousy, as well as from a feeling of admiration and deference, I felt indignant to see so sweet a creature so eagerly stared at by another. What was my astonishment when, as at length lifting his head, I recognised in the gazer the large black eyes of the stranger whom I had thought of with so much curiosity since I first saw him at Dover!

The admiration with which I had regarded the fascinating female in the carriage was but a passing gleam of the sunshine of beauty, at which a traveller stranger might look and be satisfied; but now I seemed to live but under the influence of this peculiar man, of whom I had only this day obtained a proper sight; for, whereas before I had the most unaccountable wish to see him, and could not for all my anxiety gratify my curiosity, from this day forward I saw him every day and in every place, as if he had been absolutely haunting me. Go where I would, in any public place, I was sure to meet him. If I went out in the morning he was almost the first man I met. If I rode to the country I could not look over my shoulder but I perceived him riding after me. If I went to the park he was there already, and

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stared at me as he passed with a dull and haughty smile, as if he knew me. If I tried to avoid him by going to church I was sure to find him in the very next pew to myself. Could all this be accident, or was I under some enchantment? He was a handsome man, with extremely dark eyes and very white teeth, and his whole physiognomy sometimes put on a most peculiar expression. Was I too idle that I thus observed him, or too imaginative that I thought thus about him? or had he thrown some spell over me? I really know not, but every time I saw him afresh a nervous sensation ran through me. He made me forget even the interesting angel that had so often delighted my fancy in the park. Who or what could he be? Was he any ordinary living mystery? Was he Mephistophilis walking the earth? or was he the allegorical demon of England, who mocked the curiosity and froze the feelings of the stranger?

Avoiding him by staying at home for two or three days, I soon convinced myself that I was too solitary in mind and too abstracted to think justly, and that by a species of involuntary yet indulged musing upon single objects, I was all this time making something out of absolute nothing. The society at the boarding-house began to break in upon my reserve. The young men quizzed me, and the landlady bantered me, and as for Mr. Compton he laughed at me with so much good humour, and rallied me with so much clumsy good sense, that my prejudices against him began to give way, and I talked to him with even an approach to freedom.

"I doubt not, Mr. Eisenbach," said he, "that you think yourself exceedingly deep and penetrating, and that when you go back to Germany you will write a perfectly correct account of English society, seeing that you know it so intimately. Nay, do not deny it, for I know that that is your drift; and I myself will give you several hints which you will find particularly valuable. But I would not have you to give yourself much further trouble in diving into the depths of English

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manners, having evidently such large opportunities of acquiring knowledge, for a man always writes with most zeal upon a subject that he does not understand."

"I certainly don't understand *you*."

"So much the better. It is by want of understanding that the world thrives, for there is no confidence like the confidence of ignorance; and if your book itself was understood, it would have but little success. But, harkee, you'll never get out of England without being taken in."

"How mean you?"

"Why, courted."

"What! *I* courted?"

"To be sure. The courtship in England is all done by women, and you are just the honest softling to be wooed and won, if you only have plenty of the *geldt* to make it worth the while of mothers and single sisters to sue for your hand. But when you are *in* for it, if you happen to like your wife and wish to live godly and honest, without horns above your ears, I would advise you to take her beyond the Rhine with you, or at least out of London; for although the French fashion in this respect is rather *out* at present, there are strange doings occasionally take place in town."

"The English women are allowed to be exceedingly virtuous?"

"They are so in general. But what between ill-assorted marriages daily made for the sake of fortune, and the arts of certain showy men on town; what between the monotony of English life, which makes even the semblance of intrigue so seducing, as it is so dangerous,—there are things happen now and then which help to swell the muddy stream of human guilt, and to keep up the bitter tide of private misery."

"This is strong language; but know you of any late occurrence that causes you to speak so?" and as I spoke the still unexplained scene at Dover came naturally across my mind.

"Yes; but if I told you you would put it in your book."

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"Pshaw! I am not going to make a book."

"'Pon your honour!" said my new friend, with affected vulgarity, and looking incredulously in my face. "Well, my friend, if you don't write a book while you are ignorant you have little chance of doing so when you come to know something; for ignorant people always write most and fastest; and those who are more ignorant still like a book the better for containing little that is of any value. But excuse me," he added, taking out his watch, "my hour is come—I have a d——d drunken affair to go to to-night, which will probably keep me very late,"—and thus saying, and swallowing the *débris* of his wine, he left the company to take a deeper dose somewhere else.

The resources of a stranger and a bachelor are few, even in London; at least I found them so. His very pleasures are solitary, and if not, are sure to be in some shape mercenary or interested. I took up my hat, and having the privilege of a seat in one of the common sort of boxes, I determined to while away the evening at the opera.

The house was thin, and the box into which I had the entrée contained already two ladies, friends of the owner, accompanied only by a spoiled boy. I felt my situation awkward, as a stranger in England will often do, but putting on the dogged dulness of a thick-headed John Bull, to avoid that hateful suspicious look with which in London a foreign face is usually regarded, I sat down behind the women without speaking.

The music that I heard was elaborate and unmeaning, and as for the ballet it was well enough, only that it was a mere repetition as usual. But the ladies in front of me held a whispering conversation, which, becoming exceedingly earnest, I was, though not an eaves-dropper, obliged to give attention. It might be only a tale of private scandal, but from the manner in which they talked they seemed to have found a mine of family romance, the details of which I could only catch by snatches and single words, but over which the speakers gravely shook their heads as they hinted at

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strange facts and stranger surmises, deep guilt and deeper suffering, which formed another painful illustration of the weakness and the waywardness of poor human nature.

Could it be possible that there could be any identity between this tale and what I had observed at Dover? But I could learn nothing connectedly, for probably nothing satisfactory was known by the ladies after all. In the words I overheard there seemed to be dim reminiscences of an envied bride and a proud bridegroom, of a splendid sacrifice to Hymen which the fashionable long talked of, and of Continental adventures afterward, which were only known by innuendoes to the world, and spoken of chiefly among the servitor orders in dark and doubtful whisperings. Then there were hints of open assignations and midnight manœuvres, and bribed servants and dark passages, and of a strange man whom no one knew, who had lately been seen on the streets of town.

Of this person the ladies spoke with perfect enthusiasm, while yet, with reference to his conduct, they affected disgust and indignation. In the hyperbolical language of female admiration, he was described as one who dressed as no man had ever dressed before, and looked as no other man in England ever looked:—a man of high title and haughty bearing, with a complexion admirable, because un-English—a profile like that of the masterpieces of Phidias, and a mustache overlooking a scornful lip, that had about it the very curl and authority of aristocracy.

As to the lady, her beauty was spoken of in those critical and doubtful terms in which one woman usually talks of the attractions of another. Gay and fascinating once, she was described as so no longer, and was now never seen in public unless it might be in that very house, the opera, where, added the ladies, she might possibly be that very evening.

While listening to this gossip, my eye was much struck by a face which I observed to steal occasionally from behind the curtain of a box nearly opposite. The

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countenance retired quickly, and I again lost its bold and almost magnificent expression of beauty. I laid my head back and kept the glass to my eye for a quarter of an hour, while I watched for the reappearance of this hidden star that eclipsed all others around it. While thus occupied I heard the door of the box next to the one where I sat opened, and a single man, as appeared by the heavy foot, ushered in. Again I saw the head of the lady I was watching come forth from behind the curtain to look at Pasta, and to my astonishment she slowly and with seeming caution turned her face towards where I was, and, as I thought, gave a hasty glance exactly at myself. I kept my glass to my eye, instinctively impelled to observe the motions of this apparition. I declare on my soul I saw her smile and almost make a sign to me—it seemed evidently to me. I could not mistake it, but in another instant the face was lost behind the curtain.

It was now my disposition, as a stranger, to be curious and observing, and solitude had made me thoughtful. I began to wonder what could cause a single individual to come to the opera so late as the man in the next box had done. Again I saw the lady opposite look across. It now struck me that it was not to me but to this late-coming stranger that she had seemed to smile.

The great curtain of the stage was about to drop, and I should soon know nothing. My curiosity was not to be restrained, and putting my head out to get a sight of my neighbour, I saw a black, foreign-looking head, which turning round at my seeming impertinence, the large dark eyes of the man by whom I had of late been haunted glared full upon me. I declare I was seized with an absolute tremor, and as the house rose, I found a sort of refuge in losing myself in the crowd of the crush-room without. But by the time I had arrived at the colonnade below, and my ears began to be stunned by the shouts of the servants and people calling for the carriages of the nobility, my curiosity returned, impelling me to try, if possible, to obtain a sight of the lady.

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This attempt was useless now; for though silks rustled around me, and lights glared above, and forms of beauty flitted past, and all the perfumes of Paris wafted across my sense, the crowd was too great for me to see any one distinctly, unless I had made myself more obtrusive than it was my nature to do.

Just as I had got, however, among the soldiers and valets, who served to choke up the outer vomitory of the theatre, the steps of a carriage without the columns were let down with a rattle, and I turned my head to look at its intended and probably fair occupants. A noble female figure, wrapped in a carriage-cloak, swam past me like a queen. As she bent herself in stepping into the carriage, I had a single glance of a bold Roman profile, which might have suited that of Lucretia herself. I could see no more save a dark eyelash, but a portion of the headdress, which I was able to notice, informed me at once. I knew it was the very same I had seen from behind the curtain—at least I thought so. I tried to get another look to assure myself, but the crowd jostled me out of sight, and I only heard the carriage rattle off down the street, while I elbowed my way forth towards my lodgings almost in a fever of ungratified and yet strongly-excited curiosity and interest, concerning some persons I could not tell whom.

CHAPTER III.

When I got to the door of my own home, some fancy struck me, of waywardness or of an odd humour, and I could not bear to enter it. Though the night was by no means particularly inviting, I turned away, and determined, late as it was, to make up for my late confinement, by strolling away some distance, before I attempted to sleep. I was by no means well acquainted

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with London, so, proceeding northward, I was soon lost among turnings and crossings.

Wandering through that labyrinth of dull streets that shoot up their tiers of long windows and tire the eye with their eternal sameness from Piccadilly to the Regent's Park, on turning a corner, and looking down one of those interminable lines of lamps that blind the eyes and fatigue the imagination, a figure intervened in the near distance, which, by continuing for a considerable time in my view, and by its slow tread and measured movement, strongly attracted my observation.

Striding forward to get nearer, I observed that the figure wore an elaborately tasselated cloak, while a crushed opera-hat was placed out of all keeping upon his thickly furnished head, as if stuck on to help to disguise the wearer.

There are individuals who, when the eye once fixes upon them, excite one's curiosity we know not why. By his stately gait and muffled elaboration of Spanish cloak, the man before me impressed me with the idea that he was a person of rank; but why such a man should be wandering the streets of London on foot at this hour could not well be accounted for, unless some secret intrigue was supposed, which might make it unsafe to employ any decent vehicle. When this fancy had once got into my head, after what I had overheard at the opera, I was instantly smitten with that woman's curiosity which still was at hand, and determined to watch the motions of the stranger.

Crossing to the opposite side of the street to prevent suspicion, I at length observed the cloaked man stop at one of those large black doors so common in the west of London; but instead of seeking admittance to the mansion by the bold and decided knock and ring of aristocracy, I observed him touch the great door gently by three light taps with the head of his cane, when instantly the door opened, as if a servant had been stationed behind it to wait for him, and the next moment he was out of my sight.

The incident struck me as so singular, that, stepping

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across the street, I determined at least to mark the house into which the stranger had been thus suspiciously admitted, and afterward to inquire the name of the street, in case any event should occur to give me a clew to the affair. I stepped up to the door, and in looking up close to it for a number or name, I unintentionally gave it a slight push with my hand. To my astonishment it swung wide open; and as if an infatuation of curiosity was over me, in another instant I was in the interior of the hall.

I had stepped in, in the first instance, to catch hold of the door, and shut it again without being observed. I did so, but finding no one near, and the entrance lighted only by a single lamp borne by a statue in a niche on the staircase, I stood for a moment inside to take another observation. I listened, and heard feet as if cautiously ascending the stairs from an inner hall, for the mansion was extensive and magnificent, yet to me it had a strangely dead and sombre appearance.

I ventured three or four paces within to listen with better effect. I heard a foot softly treading, but it seemed at a distance. What was my consternation when on looking upwards I perceived a servant stealthily descending the great stairs almost immediately over me. Fortunately I was not seen. Stepping behind a pillar until he should pass, I observed the man go directly to the hall-door. He uttered an oath when he found it scarcely closed, but my feelings may be conceived when as I stood trembling behind the pillar, I saw the fellow double-lock and chain the door, and taking out the key, proceed with a grumble of characteristic profanity at his own stupidity to place the heavy instrument in his pocket; then putting out the dim light on the staircase, he walked past me, and descended towards the apartments below.

I was so amazed at the situation in which I now found myself, thus accidentally locked into a strange mansion, that for a few minutes I stood behind the pillar perfectly stupified. I saw that to get out from this unpleasant predicament I must make myself known to the

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inmates, and what excuse to frame or how to face them I knew not. Undoubtedly I had, with the most thoughtless folly, made myself an object of serious suspicion; and I saw that to get out of durance explanations would be necessary that could not fail to be exceedingly degrading. But when I began to anticipate the tale of this adventure getting abroad in the public, and coming to the ears of those I lived among, my face burned with forestalled shame, and my heart became absolutely sick with vexation.

I was beginning to rally my courage, however, when I heard a door open above, and a heavy step proceed along the passage. Immediately after I perceived an elderly woman, having the appearance of a sick-nurse, come tottering down the back-stairs. Every thing within this dwelling was eagerly observed by me, in order that I might obtain some idea of the sort of house into which I had got; and whether it was the deception of my agitated feelings I knew not then, but the eyes of the woman glared strangely as she passed down, as if she was intoxicated. Where on earth could I have got to? The beldam hobbled off with her candle in her hand, and soon was lost among the apartments below.

While considering what I should do, I heard a feeble voice issuing from an apartment overhead, and calling repeatedly some name which I could not distinguish. I listened anxiously as I went towards the stairs, and at every repetition of the feeble and entreating cry, I mounted up a few steps higher, impelled now by sympathy even more than by curiosity, until I soon found myself on the first landing-place, and gazing towards the open door whence the sound proceeded.

"Hannah! Hannah!"—cried the voice. "Is there no one here to attend me? Hannah, I say!—Oh, must I lie here and die of thirst!"

I stepped involuntarily towards the open door.

"Is there no one there? Where are all my servants? Where is my wife this week past?" continued the voice. "What serves all my wealth, when here I die of burning thirst? Ah, cursed wealth, without love

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—cursed wealth—I choke! I choke! Oh, could I only reach that glass, that mocks my parched tongue!"

The appeal was too much for my excited feelings—and forgetting every thing else, I walked into the chamber, and lifting the glass, towards which the sick man looked with harrowing eagerness, I held it to his lips.

"Ha!—he!—he!" uttered the feeble sick man, after he had drunk hastily, and looking up in my face with a delight that partook of the idiotcy either of raving fever or of insanity—"What brought you here, Lodowick, to give me my drink? Ha! he!—don't you know me?"

The address astonished me, when I looked in the emaciated countenance of the sick gentleman, and tried to recall a dim fancy of having seen it before. I had seen it certainly, but where or when I could not at the moment think of; for the eyes were so sunk with illness, and their expression so altered by mental imbecility, that past recollections were confounded in the pain of the spectacle.

"Hark'ee, Lodowick," whispered the sick person feebly, and still under the imagination that he knew me, "if you find that drunken old nurse on the stairs, be sure you throw her over!—be sure you do!—Oh, I am a poor wretched man!" and the pained invalid shut his eyes and groaned with a heart-touching moan.

He again opened his eyes, and gazed steadfastly upon me. "Shall I help you to more drink?" I said compassionately.

"Hell and fury!"—screamed the sick man, his countenance now changing into an expression of horror as he gazed on me—"you are not Lodowick! I know what you want. You have come here after my wife—my false wife!—but I might have known all this—for she never, never loved me—and some one such a woman must love—Oh, I am an unhappy man!"

"I solemnly assure you, sir, I have never seen her."

The countenance again lost its energetic wildness, and assumed its pleased and half-imbecile expression.

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—"Is that really the case, friend?" he said, as he still gazed—"and you attending upon me here while my own servants leave me to die. But hark!" he whispered, "there is that drunken old devil coming up again. I cannot get rid of her, for she deceives even my wife, by pretending kindness to me, while she neglects me all night. Now, my friend, will you just watch till she gets to the top of the stairs, and then pitch her over—pitch her just over—head and heels—he! he!"

"I will," said I, glad of an excuse to leave this sad scene; "I'll soon do for her;" and again I stepped out into the passage.

"This is the most extraordinary exhibition of wealth and misery," said I to myself, "that ever presented itself to my observation. Where on earth can I have got to? and where is this odd adventure to end?"

A light shot upwards from the back-stairs and across the corridor, and the old nurse now came clambering up the stairs, carrying her taper in one hand and a bottle in the other, which obliged me to mount the second flight to escape her observation. As I looked down, I observed that the wretch was nearly tipsy, but fearing to meet her eye, I hastily mounted the next stair, and in a few moments more I found myself on the second story of this strange mansion.

"How, in the name of fortune, am I to be relieved from this awkward predicament?" I again asked myself, "and where have I got to? Never did a house appear less likely for a scene of intrigue than this dismal mansion, and yet I am certain I saw that dark, solemn, aristocratical figure enter it."

My reflections were interrupted by a murmuring sigh, which evidently came from only a short distance, and stepping a few paces inward, I perceived the dark corridor crossed by a stream of light, which proceeded from a room in the passage, the door of which stood slightly ajar.

"By Heavens!" said I mentally, "since I am in this situation, I will take my chance of every consequence, in order to get at the bottom of the mysteries that

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appear about the inmates of this house," and I stepped up quite close to the slightly opened door.

I thought I heard a murmuring sound, as if of a soft whisper from within, but as I stood to listen, all was again silent. The door, moved by the draft of air from below, edged a little more open, and I could partly see inside. The glimpse of magnificence and of luxury that I obtained whetted my curiosity, now, as I was prepared for any personal exposure; and touching the door lightly, it moved half-open. The one glance of rich curtains and couches, gilding and decoration, that first caught my eye, convinced me that I was looking into no ordinary apartment, and the idea of a lady's boudoir, but more Parisian than English, came instantly across me, accompanied by that guilty feeling which one may well experience who ventures within the inner recesses of an Eastern harem.

The light seemed to burn low, but I next had a glimpse of the table, on which was placed a dim lamp, which stood on a tripod, fancifully supported by carved figures, and shed its mellow light over crystal decanters and glasses, wherein the dark ruby colour of wine, with fruits and refreshments, served in silver, and crowded together under the softened light, gave an idea of gorgeous and profuse luxuriance. The sight that next presented itself, however, almost took the light out of my eyes. The bust of a lady appeared beyond the table, as she sat with her arms folded over her breast, and seemed to gaze with an expression of excitement on some object which I could not as yet see. A noble, heroic bust it was, a white throat, and part of the bared bosom to be seen, her shoulder just touched by the curling tendrils of a bouquet of dark clustering hair, which towered above a head of the most classic form. Her lips began to move, but emitted only a whisper; she turned her face a little, and I detected in an instant the bold and striking, yet lovely feminine features of the lady whom I had seen enter the carriage, and whom I could not mistake as the very same which I had watched looking stealthily from behind the curtain at the opera

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"For mercy's sake, Georgiana, do not use me thus; I can bear any thing but this," exclaimed passionately a man's voice from within.

The lady sighed, and compressed her lips, but replied not.

"What have I done, Lady Stains, to merit this treatment?"

"A slight thing for a man of gallantry," said the lady bitterly, but yet with scornful dignity,—"only ruined me—ruined me, my lord—that's all."

"How can you say so, Lady Stains? when after all my assiduity, all that my unconquerable love has impelled me to do and to submit to for your sake, I have never until this night obtained one half-hour's private—"

"Are you not at this moment," interrupted the lady, "alone with me in my boudoir after midnight, and Sir Archibald's own servant privy to it? Has the world leisure to judge from any other than exterior circumstances? and is it its way to take the favourable view of the conduct of those whom it envies or affects to pity? Alas! you, my lord, and my own thoughtless heart, which has given you too much encouragement, and my girlish ambition, and my mercenary relations who have placed me in the unnatural circumstances in which I am, have ruined me—ruined me! Oh, if it were possible in this world for unintentional guilt to retrace its steps—"

"Guilt! my lady—how can you talk thus when you know—"

"Is not that very assiduity that you make your boast guilt, when *I* did not peremptorily forbid it? Is not this meeting deep guilt on my part? Were any one of the world's prowlers after matter of scandal standing this moment behind that door, and watching us now, would the eaves-dropping wretch not call us a guilty pair, and proclaim my deep delinquency to the greedy ears of a rejoicing world, before the morning's dawn; or hold me up one day to scorn in a public court of justice, by

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witnessing, with the holy Evangelists at his lips, my everlasting infamy?"

My feelings may be conceived at this moment, as the lady paused in her passionate speech, when I thought of my present predicament; but I stood perfectly still, prepared for the worst.

"For Heaven's sake, Georgiana, do not speak so loud; and see, the door is wide open. Allow me,"—and I heard the speaker rise from his seat.

"No, my lord, you shall not, unless you mean to leave me this instant," cried the lady. "We are not come to that—to be shut in together."

The noble paramour seemed to resume his seat, while I stood doggedly where I was, but trembling, I confess, with conscious shame, and only putting my head occasionally past the door to catch a glimpse of the lady.

"My lord," she said, after a moment, "I *beg* of you to leave me. What can you possibly promise yourself by this desperate boldness, after what I have told you?"

"Georgiana," he said, assuming a tone of tenderness, "you are unhappy."

"I know I am: is that any novelty among our helpless sex?"

"And you are wedded to one who—"

"Heavens! my lord, what would you say? How few women, from the highest to the lowest, are married to their hearts' wish!"

"From what I can learn the present illness of Sir Archibald is a mere repetition of those fits which may keep you lingering over him, partly as his sick-nurse and partly as the endurer of his humours, until the blessed years of your youth shall have wasted themselves in sickening depression and confinement; and that love for which you were born, and which is the strongest feeling of your nature, shall burst the swelling heart in which you would in vain stifle it."

I looked forth as he paused, and saw the lady cover her eyes with her long plump fingers, and while lean-

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ing her head upon her naked arm, her breast heaved with deep emotion.

"Lady, listen to me," continued the other voice eagerly; "you talk of there being little novelty in your circumstances; but point me out among all whom you know in society any one of half your beauty so wretchedly situated; and would there, let me ask, be, even in the eyes of the world, any novelty in a young and lovely woman breaking through the trammels that others forced upon her at an age when she was unable to judge of the imperative requirements of her own heart,—and abandoning age, imbecility, and jealous impotence for congeniality—happiness—joy such as I—I, Georgiana, who adore you, could bestow—and *will* bestow—will confer and lead you to, throughout every moment of my future life, and with every advantage of my birth and my fortune—seek for that contentment which in present circumstances you can never taste. Lady, think—consent—will you?—this moment is mine—this opportunity, that I have bought with so many nights' watching, is ours—put yourself under my protection—despise the babble of nine short days at home while you and I shall be abroad enjoying life and love—Georgiana! speak! are you mine? I will devote my existence to you!"

The lady slowly raised her head and let her white arm droop from her face as she fixed her eyes on the speaker. The pause was like the breathless instant that precedes the flash of the tube which deprives some being of existence. By heaven, I was unable to resist my anxiety to assure myself regarding the other, and taking half a step forward I saw the eager half-foreign countenance of that stranger whom my curiosity had followed from the hour of my arrival in England, gazing with an ardour that was almost terrible in the beauteous face of the lady.

"Now," said she, calmly; "now I have heard you out—now I know all—now I see all that the dread vista of futurity presents, should I listen to your audacious proposal—Go, my lord! Go!—Leave me I say—I

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will not hear you! Not a word further will I listen to. Go! else I will call up the servants;" and as she rose I retreated a few steps outside the door.

"Does not the world, as you say, already call you guilty?" I heard the other say, "and does not even your jealous husband believe it and upbraid you concerning me?"

"Yes, and I deserve it; but I have another to answer to—I have my own conscience to satisfy. Now leave me, my lord," she added, entreatingly; and now thinking that this strange scene was about to be terminated, I hastily, and on tiptoe, traversed the corridor, and again stood at the head of the stairs.

All was again dark around, but I had no sooner got to the staircase, while the stranger within still held a low-toned altercation with the lady, unwilling, as it appeared, to abandon his object, than a smell of fire crossed my sense, as if ascending from below. I slipped again softly down to the first landing-place, and now the smell became decidedly sensible. Recollecting the tipsy state of the nurse, I stood once more at the door of the sick man's chamber. A strong light gleamed at the foot of the door, which was now shut. A rapid suspicion again aroused my feelings, and braving every personal consideration, I turned the handle of the chamber-door and walked in. I soon saw what had given rise to my suspicions.

The careless beldam was sitting at a table by the window sound asleep; the top of her muslin cap burnt completely off, having been consumed by the flame of the candle over which she nodded, and the ignition of the cap and shawl having now communicated with the window-curtain, the latter was rapidly burning towards the drapery above.

I saw that without aid the fire would instantly communicate to the bed in which the sick man lay now also fast asleep, and, in short, that in five minutes more the room would be in flames. As I ran towards the window, and, drawing aside the further curtain which was not yet ignited, perceived that the shutters were not closed,

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a sudden thought struck me regarding the termination of this adventure. Heaven help us, but man is a selfish animal, for in another instant my own awkward predicament came so home upon myself, that I resolved to risk the burning of the mansion, and all other consequences, for the chance now afforded me of getting unobserved out of the house.

Pulling away the unconscious old woman, who was drunk asleep, as well as some other baggage from near the window, I witnessed the flames spreading, without in the mean time giving any alarm; and retreating towards the door, which I shut as I went out, to prevent the draft of air, and then descending the great stair, going to the entrance, I lifted the end of the heavy chain and thundered violently at the hall-door.

The sound of my unexpected noise had not died away within the mansion, when I heard a scream above-stairs, and light footsteps come hastily forth; but the lady seemed to have fainted, for the sounds ceased, and in an instant after I heard the wires move by the walls through the lobbies, and a bell ring violently below.

Again I thundered at the door, and in a few moments after the servant, whose duty it appeared to have been to sit up, came from his lurking-place in great terror, and passing me while I again stood concealed behind the pillar, I observed him take the key from his pocket, and, to my great relief, proceed to open the door. Looking out and seeing no one, he stepped forth as I had calculated, to ascertain who raised this alarm. The street was silent and deserted, but in his terror he crossed the way while I slipped out, and going up to him, exclaimed in his ear, "Are you mad? Do you not see that your house is on fire?" at the same time pointing up to the blazing window. "The whole inmates might have been burnt to death," I added, "had I not most fortunately observed it in passing and given the alarm by knocking at the door. Hasten to the apartments, and I will be here to call assistance."

The fellow ran back in terror, and was soon joined by some of the other servants, but I was not at all dis-

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posed to trust myself again inside, and waited without to observe the result and be ready to give any exterior assistance. I could observe that there was not a little bustle and alarm in the mansion, but at length it died away, and with the burning of the window-curtains the whole actual damage seemed to have terminated, excepting what might have been the effects of the accident upon the invalid gentleman, whom I now knew to be the same I had seen at Dover, and whose screams I could plainly hear as I stood in the street amid the confused noise within the house.

Before finally retreating I went once more up to the door to observe the number on it, when it was cautiously opened by the same servant, and the cloaked figure of the aristocratic stranger issued forth. The very sight of this remarkable being had such an effect on me that on perceiving him I had not the power to move.

"This is the gentleman, your lordship," said the servant, to my astonishment, as he pointed to me, "who saved the house by giving the alarm without."

"Ha—is it so?" said the former, appearing to know me; but after one start of animation his features relaxed into the same cold haughty smile that I had at first observed, as if chagrin and disappointment had sat on it, his large eyes appearing incapable of shooting that lightning of passion which I had been the witness of in the boudoir above. He passed on, however, turned the corner of a street, and before I had completely recovered my surprise or was able to use my legs with effect, he had entirely vanished from my sight.

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CHAPTER IV.

When I found myself fairly in the street, after the termination of this adventure, it had still such an effect upon me that I could scarcely believe that I was really quite alone, and delivered from the shame of which I had so long felt the painful apprehension. I therefore pushed my way on from street to street, as I thought, homewards, as if some one was rapidly chasing me, and several times looked over my shoulder to see if the personage who had so long excited my curiosity was not actually dodging my steps. Meeting, however, with no one, excepting here and there a solitary watchman,—for we in England were then under the old watchmen regime,—and perceiving, behind and before, a clear street, without a sound disturbing the silence, I began to pace slower, and to suffer the current of my own reflections upon all that I had witnessed.

The image of a man—any man—is in general easily dismissed from another man's fancy, but that of a woman, a beautiful woman, is much more adhesive; particularly to the imagination of a thoughtful and sober-minded stranger, cast by chance into the ocean of human beings, which ebbs and flows through the complex receptacles of a great capital. And yet I did not think of the lady I had seen with any other sentiment than the natural interest we all feel in the fate of a fascinating and high-minded woman, placed in circumstances in which she neither could give nor receive the pleasure for which, in person and mind, she was eminently fitted; and now, in consequence, and by the arts of another, tottering on the brink of ruin.

The interest I had at first felt about the strange man was now turned into suspicion, and almost abhorrence; and should the lady not have the strength of mind to persist in her exclusion of him, or in any degree give

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way to his further attempts upon her virtue, I saw reserved for her in the dim vista of the future, misery and degradation, such as saddened me to think of.

As I mused concerning this lady, however, by the natural scene-shiftings of fancy, and the affinities of association, another image of female beauty was presented to my mind, namely, of that sweet innocent face which I had so frequently had opportunities of contemplating, as it passed me like the fleeting dream of an angel, during my solitary rambles among the well-dressed crowds of this Babel of the west. Beauty—thoughtless, or perhaps pensive beauty,—I speak of the unconscious possessor,—how seldom is the young and joyous heart of its wearer aware of the number of its secret but sensitive worshippers, as, gliding past, like regretful ghosts, even while they walk the busy streets, its keen glances are darted into their inmost souls, and are afterward dwelt upon, in fancy, as the precious lightning of the gods, which shooteth down from heaven, to give a golden lustre and a bright radiance to the heavy clouds of existence! These touching looks of female loveliness, how they linger upon the recollection of the solitary bachelor, as he sighs over the imagination of joys which he cannot taste, until he lays his head at night on his cold dull pillow; or as, for want of better occupation, he wanders, as I did, at three in the morning, a restless stranger in the streets of the metropolis, looking out for questionable midnight adventures, like the discontented spirit of prowling observation, which glares in at the murky corners of city crime, and "vanishes at crowing of the cock."

I was aroused from these thoughts by the noise of tongues, which suddenly disturbed the narrow street into which I had now strolled, and looking up and around, observed that I had wandered far from my home, and got almost into the city. I hastened forward, however, towards where the noise came from (for night-wandering gentlemen need not attempt to be very select in their society at such hours), and soon my sentimental cogitations were dissipated by a scene which, however

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new to me then, is no rarity in the streets of London. I observed two men, having the appearance of gentlemen, engaged together in an angry quarrel, and abusing each other with excellent drunken vigour. The dispute seemed ready to end in blows; but having been put on my guard as a stranger, against midnight affrays in the metropolis, I kept aloof for a minute or two, until I observed the taller man of the two, after calling the other several different sorts of scoundrels, collar him with both hands and shake him violently. Giving way to my feelings, I now drew near, and begged of the strange man to desist, when partly letting go the other, he turned his wrath upon me; and, as I now determinedly interfered, he struck at me with his freed hand. The blow was returned—the shorter man struggled, and also sparred, and a round engagement of fisticuffs was soon the consequence of this gentlemanly business.

Had I been an Irishman, nothing could have been more gratifying than this affair, for all the watchmen near were comfortably asleep, the coast was perfectly clear, and we being, as I soon found out, all personal acquaintances, fought with the more good-will. The only thing unpleasant was, that the little man, who, on his hat being knocked off, I found, by the bald patch on his crown, to be no other than my friend Compton, and whose sight was mystified by the liquor he had taken, as soon as he got free of the grasp of his antagonist, dealt his blows on me, and thus the engagement became of a general and rather promiscuous nature.

Sobriety, however, was the better part of my valour, with reference to the others, and having at length succeeded at least in scattering my opponents, the taller man then started off down the street, and we two who remained began to look at each other, and to take breath.

"Bless my conscience!" cried Compton—looking closely in my face; for my excellent new acquaintance always swore by a quality which he scarcely even professed to possess, "can it possibly be you?—and how well you *did* deal about you. I am amazed, sir—I am charmed with you! And to be in the streets

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of London at this hour in the morning, and so ready to join in an honest quarrel! You are converted, sir—you are civilized—you are *homo elegantiarum*. You deserve to be presented with the freedom of the city."

In this way the man's tongue ran on, complimenting me in language of drunken absurdity for the very things of which I was heartily ashamed; and indeed his gratitude for my interference in his favour was so great, that I could hardly persuade him to move from the spot.

By this time the hour was too unseasonable for us to attempt to get into our lodgings, and my companion, knowing the town well, dragged me towards Covent Garden, in some of the hotels round which he proposed we should sleep. When we got, however, under the piazzas, and I thought to end this low-lived scene by housing my companion in an inn where we saw a light still burning, as he groped for the bell at the door a fit of drunken obstinacy came over him, and, nill ye will ye, he would not enter.

"I tell you what, Mr. Thingumback," he again was pleased to say, "I've quite a new opinion of you after your gentlemanly conduct this night. I'll take you into my favour, sir; I'll patronise you, and by G— you shan't go home until I show you something more of London. Nay, no excuses—no arguments. I'm a lawyer, and can tell you the value of an argument to sixpence. Besides, you can put it all in your book—ha, ha, ha! Come; for I have got something to say to you, if you can attend to it.—Heavens, how drunk you are!" he added, with the usual penetration of more sober persons upon the subject of their own faults, as he looked up muddily in my face.

It was in vain that I refused or insisted; and he speedily brought me to some place near, which is kept open all night, and which has, I believe, been already described oftener than requisite. I saw, however, little that was remarkable in the house, except a young man of exceedingly respectable appearance asleep on his seat in one of the boxes below. Being placed by ourselves in an upper room, the lawyer, looking steadily in my

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face, and complimenting his own penetration in having discovered so sensible and tractable a person as myself, began to talk to me with extraordinary distinctness and consistency. Having determined to give me his confidence, his tale, to my astonishment, was regarding a young gentlewoman, whom he described with such enthusiasm of gross admiration, and in such terms, as led me unconsciously to collate all he said with the beauteous female whom my eyes had so often followed when she appeared in public, but whom I had of late looked out for in vain.

"But what," said I, "is all this to you? What is your meaning with regard to the lady?"

"The fact is," said he, "I am tired of boarding-houses and bachelorism, particularly as I can now afford to buy a wife."

"To buy a wife!" exclaimed I, repeating his vile expression; "what do you mean with reference to a girl such as you describe?"

"I mean exactly as I say—because I choose to speak plain language. May not any thing be bought in England?—and have not I money to purchase beauty?" he added, clapping his hand on his breeches-pocket. "Ay, a heavy purse is a loadstone so powerful, that hang it up between heaven and earth, as the Catholic priests do, and it will draw you upwards and open to you gates unspeakable, after you have purchased here below all that the world offers to the best bidder."

I stared a moment in the face of my coarse companion, as I reflected on what he said—for even truth itself is disgusting when too broadly spoken—and then said simply,

"But the girl's affections?"

"Are upon me!"

I again glanced over those maudlin salacious gray eyes, and that tinged nose, which had always repelled me, and felt most uncomfortable.

"I tell you they are upon *me*—that is, they are and must be upon dress and equipage, and the means of

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creating envy; and am not I, with my purse, the representative of all these?"

"And has the lady consented?"

"I never asked her."

"But her father?"

"If he does not I have a lawyer's alternative—I'll ruin him! I've lent him money."

"And do you call this English manners and proceedings?"

"Certainly—at least with wise people—and the English are getting wiser every day. Now you may put that in your book if you like—ha, ha, ha!"

I again looked at the man, and then gave a glance round the mean apartment. I never in my existence felt so humbled as I did at this moment, to think that I was making myself a companion of such a wretch, and in a place which I am now ashamed to think of. How dear-bought is that thing which we call knowledge of the world! A thought, however, struck me at the moment, that I might be useful to some one in reference to this business, and I determined to persevere in my inquiries.

Whether during the pause, however, Compton had begun to suspect me I hardly can judge; but what little additional I could get out of him after this went to convince me that he had some strange schemes on hand, which were intended to ruin the happiness of some amiable family, whom he judged of only by his own gross conceptions; and, absurd as the notion seemed, I could not withal entirely divest myself of a distant suspicion that possibly the whole might have reference to her whose simple beauty had so dwelt upon my fancy since I had become a wandering stranger in London.

Becoming exceedingly uneasy in the company of my neighbour, and perceiving that sleep began to overpower him, I was now enabled to persuade him to adjourn to the hotel. The day, as we again emerged into the open air, was beginning to break, and to my surprise, Covent Garden was already crowded with its early frequenters from the country, who, with numerous carts filled with

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all manner of fruits and kitchen-stuffs, caused a species of bustle that had a peculiar effect to a stranger. My mind, however, was scarcely in a humour to observe it, and succeeding in getting into the inn, I at length, weary and jaded, retired to my apartment. Thus ended the adventures of this, to me, memorable night.

CHAPTER V.

The tedium and vulgarity of the street and tavern adventures of the previous night were positively worth submitting to for the sake of the consequences to which they led, and particularly of the look of incredulous astonishment which Compton put on, at our late breakfast on the following morning, upon my repeating what he had told me regarding his scheme of marriage, disclosed to me in his cups. He had no previous conception that the old proverb *in vino veritas* had any application to so guarded a fox as himself, neither had he the slightest recollection of the latter part of the evening's transactions.

Craft begets craft, at least it ought to do so, for that is the only way that its crooked plans are to be fitly met—so, pretending to know more than Compton had actually told me, he was obliged, as we continued to converse, to give me almost his entire confidence. I did not, however, in return give him mine; for though I suspected, from former hints, that he must have known the strange nobleman who had so oddly interested me, taking my cue from himself, I drank in every thing that my ears could catch from him, but determined to say nothing in return until I saw proper time. Meanwhile he began to affect to treat me with the highest confidence, which I easily discerned was only the consequence of his having already trusted me further than he intended; but as I saw as well as himself that a third person would be

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useful to him in these matters, on his proposing to me to take upon myself that responsible office, influenced by a newly-excited curiosity, I positively refused, unless he was disposed directly to introduce me to the lady whose hand he sought, and also to her father, concerning whom he entertained the benevolent intentions let out on the previous night.

I did not entirely like his answers to me on this point, but made no reply, until a letter he found waiting for him at our lodgings on our return thither seemed to give him new light; and brightening up when he had read it, he said, with his usual triumphant yet freezing chuckle, "Ha! this is lucky—times are changed with the Fortesques when they are obliged to come to me. In five minutes," he added, taking out his watch, "her father will be here."

"Well," said I, "and what of that?"

"Nothing—but that you seemed to take an interest in the lady. Hark! *there* is an aristocratic knock for you. 'Tis he, I'm certain."

I walked to the window, and in two minutes saw a tall elderly gentleman descend from a plain green carriage. The door of it was not shut after him. A delicate female figure next stepped out of it, and what was my astonishment, when, in spite of veils and cloaks, I was able to recognise the perfect profile of the beautiful creature whom I had so long followed with my eyes through the public places of the metropolis. On Mr. Fortesque being announced, Compton went to receive the father and daughter in another room. I heard the light foot of the latter trip along the passage beside me. I could have burst through the wall to get near them, so much had the whole circumstance excited my feelings.

Through my own half-opened door, I at first heard loud and angry talk between the gentlemen. Afterward the sound of the stranger's voice sunk into subdued and low murmurings; but when the clear soft tones of a female struck upon my ear, as if she spoke in expostulating and petitioning language, I was unable to contain my feelings, and starting out into the passage

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and opening the door of a small room next to theirs, I went in to catch, if possible, some portion of their conversation. Eaves-dropping and what I was now about are not the same things. To my joy I found a small door within a recess, which appeared to have been nailed up, but the upper part of which was of green glass and covered with a light screen. Removing the screen a little, I found myself almost behind the parties, and had a tolerably distinct view of them.

"And do you really refuse me this small sum, sir?" I heard Mr. Fortesque say, casting a glance of mixed scorn and entreaty upon Compton, who stood between the old gentleman and his daughter with a nonchalance that was to me perfectly astonishing. "By heavens!" continued the petitioning father, "this last misfortune will drive me distracted! My house—the domestic hearth of my father's son—to be profaned by the vile executioners of the law, and all for less than a thousand pounds. My God! and you, too, to desert me!"

"I assure you I am exceedingly sorry, sir—*exceedingly* sorry—but these things *will* happen, and do happen every day."

"Ah, sir," said the afflicted girl, looking up to the inexorable money-trader with an expression of agony in her countenance which almost took the heart out of my body merely to witness it, "can you see my poor father thus situated, after all that has passed, and not do this for him? I thought when I accompanied him to you this sad morning, that you would surely do it *for me* at least. Oh, sir, will you,—will you, Mr. Compton?"—and the poor girl rose up and clasped her hands together in her intense agitation.

The contrast between the two faces was to me so appalling, while witnessing this sensual representative of Mammon and the Satyr gloating over that lovely countenance, as with eyes now streaming in tears the wretched girl continued to gaze upon his bloated face, hat I could with difficulty refrain from bursting into the room, to be myself her friend, or at least her advocate.

The smile with which he regarded her was to me

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worse than all, as he said, addressing her, "Perhaps—*perhaps* I may be able to find the money, since *you* thus plead for it," and leaving her, he stepped forward, and, with sly deliberation, whispered something in the ear of her father.

The start and the succeeding look which followed the proposal to the distracted victim of ruin, I will not attempt to describe; a hectic laugh was the first audible explosion of his feelings, and, after a few more words, the old gentleman again said aloud—

"Say no more, sir; I see what it has come to with me. Leave me for a moment, and I will at once make the matter known to my daughter."

Compton left the room, and I wished myself anywhere rather than to be witness of what I knew was to come between the father and his child; but interest in the whole riveted me to the spot, and I bolted the door of the room in which I was, that I might not be disturbed, and then stood again at my window to observe them.

"Matilda," I heard the pale old man say, after a pause, "a proposal has just been made to me that involves your future destiny, and the remaining fortune of my family. It is one which I should not even name to you in ordinary circumstances, but it arises naturally out of the unfortunate situation in which we are placed, and is only the last of a series of troubles; for, as the wheel of fortune is continually turning round, bringing one man up, and—"

"My dear father," said the anxious girl, "name the proposal."

"You know the man who has just left us, and how we are situated; can you not guess the purport of his whisper about you?"

"Is it possible, my father, that you could think of my being married to—to—"

"Matilda, my love, I do not think of it—I cannot—"

"Father, will it save you?"

"It will; but do not let me press it, my child, against your youthful feelings; although I should be driven to

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any act of desperation for the present—I will go and humble myself before him whom I—"

"I *will* do what you wish—I will do any thing; but, oh, my God, the wife of Compton!" and stifling her grief for a moment, she at length threw herself weeping into the old man's arms.

I was unable to bear the sobbings of both, and rushing out of the room in which I had been observing them, I encountered the money-lender in the passage.

"Where have you fled to?" said he, "I wanted to see you."

"What is that you have in your hand?"

"It is a contract—a missive contract of *marriage!*" he whispered triumphantly, "of *my* marriage into one of the oldest families in the kingdom; but I have bought it somewhat dear though. Come, you shall see the bride," and before I could reply, I found myself hurried forward by the arm into the room and the presence of the distressed gentleman and his daughter.

Matilda Fortesque started on seeing me, for my face was not unknown to her, our eyes having frequently met before; but unable to divine in what character I now so unexpectedly stood in her presence at this painful crisis, she turned away and moved towards the window.

After a formal introduction of me to the old gentleman, Compton and he spoke a few words apart, while I was unconsciously regarding only the sorrowful features of Matilda. Perceiving at once the awkwardness of the situation in which the boisterous forwardness of Compton and my own feelings had placed me, I was only prevented from instantly apologizing and withdrawing by the hope of some opportunity of defeating the plans of the lawyer, without appearing a meddler in matters of such extreme delicacy.

"Is my word not sufficient, sir?" said Mr. Fortesque now, aloud.

"It is usual in matters of business to have some little writing in a case so important. You can't ex-

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pect that I should advance another thousand pounds without—" and he offered the missive.

"Shall you not have my bond for it?"

"But there is the contract to—"

"I will give my promise and consent in the presence of your friend, should my daughter be agreeable, you also undertaking to—"

"Excuse me, gentlemen," said I; "I perceive there are matters between you to which I cannot, in honour and right feeling, be witness, unless they be perfectly voluntary on all sides."

The lady started from a revery as I uttered this, as if a sudden hope had crossed her mind, while the old gentleman threw a penetrating look towards me, which I endeavoured to return in such a way as to convey a particular suggestion to his mind. Adversity is keen of perception. Mr. Fortesque understood me, or at least seemed to do so, and I at once determined to hazard a remark founded upon what I had formerly overheard.

"I think," said I, "you talked something of a thousand pounds. If it is a common transaction arising out of Mr. Compton's profession, I will be witness to the signing of a bond or a receipt; but if there is any condition attached to the transfer of the money, to which the receiver gives an unwilling consent, you will please excuse my being present to hear it. Besides," I added, as Compton looked aghast, wondering what I was about to say next,—"money is not so scarce a commodity in England, that for so paltry a sum as a thousand pounds, a man who has property, and is only in a temporary difficulty, must be saddled with conditions which, for aught I know, may be painful to his feelings."

"Alas!" said the old gentleman mournfully, "you speak, young sir, like one that never has known adversity."

"I know this much, sir," I replied, suiting my style to the state of his thoughts, "that the adversity you seem to allude to *may* and *will* pass away; but, in cases of this nature, there are other evils which may

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arise from our own act, hastily performed under the impatience of adversity, for which time itself offers no remedy, and which even the mammon of the world's worship, when obtained, totally fails to alleviate."

The old gentleman placed his hand over his eyes when I had said this, and laid his head back on his chair in deep thought.

"You are mighty officious, I think, sir," said Compton, looking hard at me, on perceiving the impression I had made. "I have known many a man make a fine speech who could not raise a thousand pounds at a pinch."

"One of the bitterest feelings raised by adversity," said Mr. Fortesque, with a rising scorn, as he now looked at the lawyer, "is to hear small matters when urgently sought for magnified into mountains. How little I would have thought of a sum like this ten years ago!"

"'Tis a trifle not to be mentioned," said I, humouring the proud feeling of the old gentleman; "and if *I* may have the honour of being your agent, I will undertake to produce the sum within one hour, and that without any condition whatever beyond what business requires."

"By heaven you shall not!" exclaimed the money-broker, with true tradesman jealousy of me, and thumping the table as he spoke. "I'll show Mr. Fortesque that I'll deal with him as liberally as any man;" and, taking out his bank-book, he instantly, without further stipulation, drew a draft for the required sum, and presented it to the astonished father of Matilda. "Now, sir," said he, "that shows you what *I* am—and I trust that *my* liberality of dealing will not end with the mere signing of the bond for this, but will be appreciated in the quarter on which I have set my heart," and he accompanied the last words with a most complacent bow to Matilda.

"How little do we know of people's circumstances and feelings by merely seeing them in public!" I thought, as I first heard of the distress of this amiable family. "What a charming thing is joy on the countenances of

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the high-minded and the intelligent, when it comes suddenly after despondency and humiliation!" What I now witnessed, particularly in the transparent face of that heavenly creature, whom my eyes had so long followed, was what no words can ever express. And her beaming and modest glance towards myself had so much grateful feeling in it—and so much that seemed to say, "God bless you, youth, for your favourable interference at such a moment as this!" and which plainly spoke the words, "I could wish that we might meet again where we could speak to each other;" that I almost regretted that the paltry thousand pounds had not come out of my own pocket, for it would by no means have paid for this exquisite moment.

I could not, however, help admiring the tact of the old gentleman, when, squeezing my hand as we rose to separate, he thus addressed me:—

"I perceive, sir," said he, "that, though young, you are acquainted with business, which I unfortunately am not, a defect which has been the ruin of many other men, who once, like me, possessed a good fortune. And though Mr. Compton here has been frequently useful to me, yet as opposition in these matters is, I am told, productive of excellent effects, should you do me the favour of calling upon me, I shall not scruple to avail myself of your advice."

I assured Mr. Fortesque, that though professionally I was unconnected with any business, I should nevertheless be most happy if at any time in future I could render him the least service.

My habits as a stranger had made me a reader of faces, and as I turned towards Matilda, while with an evidently full heart she shook her father's hand—I could see as plain in her gleaming eyes as if the words had been written on them that she would say—"How strange are the ways of Providence! that sometimes raises us up a friend, and opens a new spring of hope, at the very last instant of gathering adversity!"

I saw, also, by her grateful glance towards me, or at least I flattered myself, that there was a stronger senti-

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ment mixed with this.—I could not be mistaken, and as soon as I had seen the father and daughter to their carriage, I hastened away from the house, lest the babble of the coarse lawyer should interrupt the delightful current of my feelings.

CHAPTER VI.

The world was now a new world to me. I no longer wandered the streets of London with that cheerless feeling of solitary individuality which had hitherto oppressed me. England, or rather Europe, was to me no longer a wide sea of busy human beings, into which I had been dropped as if from the clouds, and among which I was a lost atom of mind, unknowing, unregarded, and unknown. Now I possessed the delightful consciousness of being useful to another human being besides myself. I had been looked upon with an eye of interest and of favour, by one of the virtuous hearts, who after all are frequently to be found on the earth's surface, looking eagerly around them for that communion of congenial spirits which is the very life of their life; and towards this amiable being my heart burned within me, in proportion to the repulsiveness with which I regarded others with whom I could have no sympathy.

All this time, that is, for several days after the meeting with the Fortesques, I had never had a sight of him I called the strange gentleman, nor did I now think of him with any interest, my curiosity being pretty well gratified by the extraordinary scene I had witnessed in the mansion. In my hurry that evening I had omitted to observe the name of the street where the house was situated, and it having occurred to me one day to endeavour to find it out, I tried in vain among the labyrinth of builded sameness in the west to obtain the least trace of it. On ruminating over that affair now, the

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scene seemed so strange that I could almost have regarded the whole as a dream, had it not been for other circumstances. But respecting the stranger nobleman and the unhappy lady I was yet far from being entirely satisfied.

Considering it now time that I should perform my promise of calling upon Mr. Fortesque, I went to the street to which he had given me his address. In looking for the number of his house I happened to cast my eyes across the street; what was my astonishment to observe the tall portly figure of the strange gentleman, walking leisurely opposite to the very door I was seeking, and casting an occasional glance up towards the windows. My heart rose in my bosom at this sight with a strange sensation of mixed indignation and jealousy. I passed the door at first, then returned to observe his motions. He walked back also the contrary way, gazed up again, and then shot a dark inquisitive look across towards me. I went up the steps of Mr. Fortesque's door, and knocked boldly; the strange man seemed astonished, passed on, and I was ushered into the house.

I was received by the old gentleman, and afterward by Matilda and her mother, with that welcome expression appearing in the eyes and in the very tones of the voice, which is so much above the fictitious phrases of common ceremony, and tells of feelings towards those to whom we are irresistibly drawn, which are very unnecessary to describe by words. When I had mentioned some particulars regarding myself and of my connexions abroad, few of them as still remained alive, the old gentleman knew one of them well; we became more unreserved, and he communicated to me several matters regarding his affairs and in reference to his transactions with Compton and others, to which I listened with the deepest interest.

"Your remarks, sir," he said in the course of conversation, "appear to me so judicious that I will intrust you with another matter in which I am painfully interested, and regarding which, as you are more abroad in the

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world than I of late am disposed to be, and being much of a stranger you are not inveigled into the coteries of ordinary scandal, you, perhaps, may be enabled to render me some service. You must know that I have a niece, —alas! that I should have to mention her name with blame and regret—for the lively daughter of my poor deceased brother was beautiful and fascinating even from a child; but what will a declining family not do to retrieve its ruined fortunes? In short, my warm-hearted favourite was influenced—she was more than influenced —into a most uncongenial and ill-suited marriage. What shall I add? How can high spirit and enthusiastic energy abide mental imbecility and the sour watchfulness of a narrow mind?—and in a world where the longings of the heart are so hard to gratify, even with all the means and appliances of the most favourable circumstances, how can it be patient without one feeling answered, or one pulse beating in unison with the one to whom it is associated for life? We every day hear of legal prostitutions—these are hard words, but although few men have known what it is to be obliged to set a value upon money more than myself, I can never approve of sacrificing to worldly considerations those deep feelings of the ardent mind which, if choked and stifled in warm youth, or worn down into melancholy apathy during the sad tedium of inward suffering without hope, leave the heart in old age a withered and blasted thing, brooding with regret over a weary existence, and with blanched cheek and saddened eye supporting a burdensome pomp only to convey it to a thankless posterity."

As the old man paused in his serious communication, I wondered what all this was to lead to. After a few moments he again resumed.

"It is an old fashion of the world to sacrifice every thing in the shape of feeling or inclination to worldly advantages and fancied greatness. Undoubtedly these have their value, in their right place; but, after all, happiness and they are distinct things, and it is only vulgar and gross minds which have no just apprehension of the latter, who, at the expense of all that is dear to the

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human heart, would teach sensitive minds to seek the former as the *summum bonum* of life. When I was consulted about the marriage of Georgiana, it was in vain that I urged these things, and prophesied evil should my advice be disregarded. Even my niece herself was not arrived at the years to have any just conception of life or any understanding of her own feelings—not as yet, indeed, half-developed,—dazzled as usual with promised splendour, and worried into consent by the false representations of worldly persons, gave way, and I, the unwelcome adviser against such temptations, and the hated prophet of evil, have, I fear, been sadly in the right, if the reports that have reached me have any foundation in truth."

"What reports, sir?" said I, unconsciously, and almost with a start.

"Have *you* heard them too?" said he, sharply.

"I cannot satisfy you, sir," I said, "until I hear more fully what you allude to."

"It is regarding the truth of these very reports," he went on, "that I want, if possible, some authentic information. The eccentric baronet and she went to live abroad, on account of the wretched state of his health; they have of late returned, and have brought with them such a composition of strange accounts and mysterious scandal, as I never thought to have heard attached to any connexion of mine."

"But there must be some male person in the case, to whom these reports must also have allusion."

"There is; and that is the principal point of the mystery. A strange gentleman has been lately seen in town, to whom some say these rumours bear allusion; but though a personage whom many have remarked, no one, that I have heard of, can tell any thing concerning him, excepting that he is a man who lives splendidly, and has been more than once seen, when abroad at least, with my unfortunate niece. Nay, more, there is a peculiar-looking, but certainly elegant man, has been following with his eyes, on several occasions, my own daughter, and some fancy has taken her and her mother

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that he must be the same person which these reports refer to. We have even seen him this very morning pacing more than once before the windows in the street, and from the oddness of the circumstance we are more concerned about him than even about the repulsive urgency of Mr. Compton."

"Of Mr. Compton!" I repeated in additional surprise.

"Yes," added Mr. Fortesque; "presuming upon the circumstances in which I unfortunately am placed with him, his urgency for the hand of my daughter is perfectly torturing, almost menacing; and you may conceive how distressing the idea of such a match, could it possibly be forced on us, must be to me after the painful example of my unhappy niece. I reveal to you these things, sir," said he, "notwithstanding the shortness of our acquaintance, because I think that, stranger as you are, I can rely upon your honour as well as judgment, and because from your judicious interference when we first met, I feel no degradation in being indebted to you for that peculiar service which a third party can sometimes render in our respective circumstances."

I was delighted of course to be thus treated, but did not at all see my way clearly in respect to the information which I was expected to obtain. I was still more gratified by the further conversation I had with Mrs. Fortesque and with Matilda herself, whose beauty I will not now dwell upon, and whose soft looks and delicate sentiments sank deeply into my heart. I at length left the society of that amiable family, my whole being renovated by that glowing sentiment which gives poor human nature a taste of the joy of the gods, and makes this nether world another heaven. As I again walked the crowded streets of London, I experienced, almost with triumph, that delightful feeling so long a stranger to my bosom, that now I existed in this world not entirely for myself.

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CHAPTER VII.

"WHAT do you think?" said Compton to me one day shortly after this. "I am refused by old Fortesque, on the part of his daughter, because, forsooth, my fortune is not sufficient, and the doting spendthrift himself hardly now worth a shilling. But I'll have her! the girl shall be mine! if I should compass heaven and earth for her! She shall lie in these arms if—ay, in these very arms!—Oh, isn't she a lovely creature!"

The very thought—the bare fancy—as I looked at the bloated and sordid wretch, thus stretching out his arms before me, almost turned me sick.

"But what have you been engaged in for the last fortnight?" I inquired; "I have scarcely seen you?"

"What the devil is there about you, Eisenbach," said he, "that induces me to make you my confidant? I will tell you—but surely you cannot mean to attempt to rival me with Matilda Fortesque! No, no! you cannot. You have not got the geldt! at least not to the amount that *I* have;" and as he spoke, he clapped his hand significantly on his breeches-pocket, and looked at me with that triumph with which, in England, a rich man glories over those whom he considers poor.

Scorning to be offended by the coarse freedom of this man, I made no reply, while he went on.

"What I am worth now is but a trifle to what I shall soon be possessed of, and then—Matilda!—I shall keep three carriages!—I shall get into parliament!—I shall—"

"But why," said I, interrupting this vulgar rhapsody, "should you, with all this wealth, think of marrying the daughter of a ruined gentleman, who can bring you nothing?"

"Ha! you are raw. You know not what I know of the connexio the Fortesques, and their ultimate

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expectations. But I shall have power over them in the mean time at least. Come, will you accompany me this morning on the crowning business, and I will tell you all that is necessary by the way?"

A hackney-coach already stood at the door; and, wondering where he was going to take me, I stepped in. A stripling, who acted as his clerk, being also in attendance, came next into the coach with a bag of papers, intended, along with myself, as a witness of some contemplated transaction, and off we drove in silence. On the way he became thoughtful, as if he already repented of his confidence; talked of my being a stranger in London—of the honesty of the German character, &c. —and without giving me any insight into his plans, simply begged that I would consider him my friend, and be his, in reference to this matter—should I require to be called on before leaving England.

"What can you possibly mean?" I inquired.

"You have been my legal friend before," he said, "and on that occasion you rather disappointed me; now I give you an opportunity of doing otherwise. He to whose house we are going is rather eccentric and strange, but he is perfectly collected. You will see that, and if you see any thing that looks like the contrary, you are not to mind it. You will find him, though weak, perfectly *compos mentis*. I have long been his lawyer, and am of late his particular friend."

We stopped at the door of a large mansion; something struck me on my entrance into the hall that I had seen it before. What was my astonishment, as I mounted the stairs, to find myself in the same house into which I had been locked that, to me, remarkable night. I determined to ask no questions of my companion. We were at first ushered into a drawing-room furnished in the richest style of English luxury, and soon after the lawyer was called out, leaving me to my own reflections.

Whatever might be Compton's business in this house, I perceived that in respect to Matilda, now the great object of my thoughts, and whom I had since met with

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several times, he was making the usual mistake of worldly men, in supposing that what they have amassed by much care and some dishonesty is as all-powerful and highly valued in the view of those who have but little of it as it is by themselves; and thus he never dreamed that Matilda's father or herself would ultimately refuse him, far less that he could possibly be supplanted by such as I;—or, in short, that any other advantage of mind or person could weigh any thing in the balance against the power of wealth. As I thus cogitated Compton re-entered the room.

"I have brought you here," he said, "merely to witness the signing of a will. This could, of course, be done almost by any one, but it may be necessary hereafter that proof may be required regarding the state of mind of—"

"Make no apology," said I, and with some peculiar anticipations I followed him into the chamber of the invalid.

"Sir Archibald Staines," said Compton, pointing to the same melancholy remnant of a man whom I had twice before seen—now placed in a great chair among a pile of cushions, a small table with writing materials before him, his thin face elongated with illness, and his sunken eye wandering feebly round the room.

"Now, Sir Archibald, just sign here;" and the lawyer, with a fawning manner, put a pen into the thin yellow fingers of the sick baronet.

"Hah!—am I dying then, that you make me sign my will?" said the sick, with a ghastly smile of imbecility and terror, as, baring his long teeth and opening his hollow eyes, he looked up in the lawyer's face with the very expression of the grave.

"Oh, not at all, Sir Archibald," said Compton, "you are much improved—you look remarkably well; but it is better that this should be done before you set off for Italy, you know."

"But can't I do it when I return—and then I shall be strong and well—and Lady Staines will be quite charmed—Hah! lawyer—where is Georgiana?" he

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added, as if a sudden renovation of his mental powers had taken place,—"where is she?—I will not sign my will without her." And the sick man, to Compton's evident consternation, threw down the pen.

"It is not usual for ladies to be present on an occasion of this kind; *do*, Sir Archibald, sign at once."

"Will no one call me Lady Staines?" persisted the nervous invalid, but with increased energy. "Where are all my servants?—where is that ugly old nurse?—Compton, you wicked lawyer, you haunt me about this will—ring the bell, I say!"

The lawyer, with a look of great chagrin, pulled the bell-rope—and as the servant came in to receive his order, I felt, I confess, most strangely at the idea of again seeing Lady Staines, and could hardly credit the chance events that had conspired to make a stranger like myself witness of these extraordinary scenes in England.

Sir Archibald relapsed for a moment into his usual apathy, while Compton seemed to determine within himself on a bold push for his object.

"Just have the goodness, sir, to sign this, if you please—"

The invalid passively took again the offered pen, as he seemed to relapse into his wandering half-insensibility.

"Sign there, sir; now, do not delay, Sir Archibald, for here is a gentleman and my clerk waiting to witness this your act and deed—"

"Mr. Compton," said I, now coming forward, "unless your client has read over what he is to sign, and seems capable of understanding it, I must be excused from bearing witness to all this—"

On hearing a new voice, Sir Archibald now opened feebly his languid glazed eyes, and for the first time looked steadily upon me. As he gazed, his wan countenance again suddenly changed into a strangely excited expression,—and shrinking towards the corner of his chair he only uttered the exclamation—"Good heavens!"

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"What is the meaning of all this?" cried Compton, in renewed alarm.

The sick baronet still gazed on me. "It was no dream--" he at length uttered in a low voice,—"it could not be a dream. You are the very man."

"What man? what can be the meaning of this, Sir Archibald?" again exclaimed Compton, in amazement.

"Yes, it was you that gave me my drink that night," continued the bewildered baronet. "I know you, and saw you slip out of the room, just as I was wakened by the smell of fire. You were my guardian angel that fearful night, and as for Lady Staines—alas!—she—Compton, how know you this gentleman?"

At this moment the servant opened the door, and Lady Staines walked in among us. She almost started on observing me. The lawyer seemed to shrink into half his size, as she cast a look of inquisitive contempt towards him; while her noble figure and bearing, and her heroic beauty, in spite of the melancholy that seemed to sit upon her brow and the evident carelessness of her morning dress, involuntarily excited my admiration, as it did that of the enfeebled baronet, who now also looked in admiration on his wife under the unsuitable character of the husband of such a woman.

"You sent for me, Sir Archibald," she said, abruptly, yet with a look of some kindness.

"I did, Georgiana," and the invalid raised himself astonishingly. "Lawyer! why do you not hand Lady Staines a chair?"

The lawyer had Lady Staines placed on a seat, at the same time making her a profound bow.

"Georgiana," continued the baronet, as he still gazed on the lady across the small table on which lay the papers,—"say, are you my wife or not?"

An exclamation of amazement from the lady, at being thus addressed in the presence of strangers, was the natural consequence of this speech.

"Lady Staines," he continued, "I purposely address you in the presence of witnesses, if Heaven gives me strength to do so; for notwithstanding the flatteries of

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that lawyer, who haunts me night and day, I feel that this may be the last time I shall be sufficiently collected to speak to you seriously. I have made a great mistake in making you my wife, and your purpose and that of your friends in this ill-advised marriage will be disappointed. Here I have made a new will, which I mean to sign, and to burn the former in your presence. Lawyer, reach me that tin box."

The bosom of the lady seemed to be swelling with emotion, but she uttered not a word, while the lawyer bustled forward the box.

"Will you not speak to me, Georgiana, before I sign away my property from the whole race of your relatives?"

"If you give it to those who are worthy of it," said the lady, mildly, "then—" and she paused.

"Where will I find them?" interrupted the invalid, with his usual peevish scream: "who is worthy? I may as well will my fortune to this painstaking lawyer as to any one else."

"Gracious heavens!" was the lady's exclamation of astonishment.

"Ay, Lady Staines—just so. The bear will at least hug and hold fast his prey, and suck his paws over it in his winter's den; and that is a recommendation to all disponners of the world's wealth—but I feel myself growing weak. Give me the pen, Compton, and open the box. I once thought *you* worthy, Georgiana," he continued; "I once thought your uncle worthy—but he is a spendthrift and a fool, that Fortesque; and I now see through his motives for urging on your marriage with me. But yet, had he sought for a reconciliation—"

"Pardon me, Sir Archibald," said I, now impelled by my feelings to speak; "Mr. Fortesque, to my knowledge, was strongly against that very marriage."

The sick man looked across to me in surprise, and then cried,—"How know you that, sir? Was that really the case, Lady Staines?"

"He certainly urged me strongly against it," she

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said, her heart seeming to fill at the recollection. "My good uncle was the only one who did so, and all his prophecies have become but too true."

"You vile lawyer!" screamed the sick man, looking across upon Compton, his dim eyes kindling into the sharp flame of terrible indignation: "didn't you tell me that Fortesque was the great urger of that step for selfish motives, and that he recklessly threw away his fortune expecting that I was to replace it—and that now he stands, like the hungry grave itself, yawning for my bones, that when I am dead and buried, he may waste the substance of my forefathers in riotous living? Oh, where, where is truth on earth?"

"So far is that from the truth, Sir Archibald," said the lady, "that my poor uncle has suffered the greatest distress, brought on by pure misfortune, and much by the craft of this very lawyer, and was too proud to let you know it fully, even when he applied to you."

The sick man's mind seemed more and more aroused by astonishment at the manner in which he had been deceived.

"I was witness of his deep distress," said I, "when, accompanied by his daughter, he went to borrow money of Mr. Compton; and I have since been witness of the high honour and just pride of that interesting family."

"Went to borrow money of this man!" exclaimed the lady; "my sweet cousin so degrading herself! and this man not to inform me of it—while he was poisoning your ear, Sir Archibald! Wretch!" she continued, now rising up, her fine eyes flashing fire upon the lawyer, "how am I degraded to be obliged to sit in your company; but my uncle himself shall expose you. Yes, Sir Archibald, I have sent to Mr. Fortesque en-
ing him to come to me here—even here, and Lex-
his very day, that I may throw myself on
efore him, and before you too, my husband,
uld but speak kindly to me at length, to ac-
dge all my follies, and to ask for pardon of you
of Heaven—for—I am indeed—indeed—an un-
happy woman."

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At this moment a loud knocking at the door indicated a visiter, and a servant entering announced Mr. and Miss Fortesque, wishing to be admitted to Lady Staines.

"Is he so bitter against me, that he will not condescend to come to my sick-chamber?" said the startled invalid.

"The virtuous have no need to condescend unworthily," said the lady; "and it is you, Sir Archibald, that have been bitter against him, refusing his request at his utmost need, because this vile lawyer, to whom you have of late resigned yourself, persuaded you he was a spendthrift. Beg of Mr. Fortesque and his daughter," she added, turning to the servant—"beg of them, in all our names, to step into this apartment."

The scene that now ensued may *perhaps* be faintly imagined—the first surprise of Mr. Fortesque and Matilda on perceiving me, as well as the lawyer, in presence of the sick baronet—their delight on hearing the turn that had taken place in his original intentions—and the terrible and almost terrific agitation of the lady as she acknowledged, particularly to her uncle, sins and follies which had all but ended in her dishonour—and as she begged the forgiveness of her dying husband, and poured execrations on the artful and seductive man who had spared no pains or expense to destroy her reputation and her peace.

"Take my hand, Georgiana," said the sick baronet, scarcely able to articulate from the effect of the scene—"take my hand"—and he held out his thin fingers to the kneeling lady—"I believe you—I do believe you, and I take to myself much of the blame. Lawyer!—put that will into the fire."

"Into the fire, Sir Archibald?"

"Do it!—you have made it, and you shall burn it with your own hands."

"Sweet soul—sweet innocent being," continued the baronet, his feeble eye resting on the countenance of Matilda, as, deeply affected with the scene, she sat watching the countenances of all, and then gazing at the will blazing into ashes on the grate.—"You will be something the better of my property when I am gone

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—would that I could see you happily—happily married, before I go hence—and the baronetcy of Staines be extinct for ever."

He murmured something further which I could not distinctly hear, the apathetic exhaustion seeming again to come over him. We at first thought he was dying, but when, as he began to recover, Mr. Fortesque was congratulating his niece, as well as beginning to converse with renewed pleasure, our harmony received a sudden shock from what followed; for the baronet, beginning to revive, and fixing his eyes on my face, muttered thus:

"Who this stranger is I don't know, but he spoke the first word this morning to undeceive me regarding these my last remaining friends, and I feel myself indebted to him. It was he gave me my drink too when my head swam with fever, and my lips burned with thirst—and it was at the dead of night, that night of the fire—when all was silent in my house—and Lady Staines—Heavens!—what thought is this that comes over me "

"Can this be raving only?" said the lady, as the company first looked at each other, and then turned their eyes on me.

"Sir," said the baronet, addressing me with a solemnity that was absolutely distressing, "did you not one night hold a cup of drink to my lips in this very chamber?"

The eyes of all were fixed on me—I felt my face glow with a flush that spoke more than my words—when, with a hesitating voice, I answered that I did.

"And how did you come to be in my house at midnight?"

I made no reply.

The kindling eyes of the baronet wandered from the confused face of his lady to mine, while Matilda seemed ready to faint.

"Answer me truly, sir, as I am a dying man—how long have you been acquainted with Lady Staines?"

"I never spoke to her ladyship in my life."

"Georgiana, know you not this gentleman?"

"I never saw him that I know of until this morning."

Matilda began to breathe again, and so did her father, while I in a few wo ds explained, to the astonishment

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of all, how that, finding the street-door ajar as I passed, I stepped in to inform the inmates, and that hearing a feeble voice calling for drink, I ventured up stairs and gave attendance to the sick; the fire explained the rest, or at least served to save the evident dread of the lady, lest I should say any thing that would undo all that she had effected; and all now joined in acknowledging with surprise the extraordinary means by which Providence had brought me into their acquaintance, and made me instrumental in rendering them what they were pleased to call the most essential services.

I stood up to take my leave, for, after all, I was still little more than a stranger to those present. As I made my acknowledgments to Mr. Fortesque for the pleasure I had found in his acquaintance since I came to know him, the old man seemed affected, and Matilda, as if forgetting every thing but her feelings, rose and put her right hand frankly into mine. As we looked in each other's faces at this present parting, the eyes of all, particularly of Lady Staines, became fixed upon us. At this instant the silence was startlingly broken by the usual scream from the feeble voice of the sick baronet, and with hectic energy he was just able to say,

"I see it—I see it—this is the fulfilment of my wishes! and there, before me, is the beginning of happiness and love, such as *I* never experienced. Fortesque, do you consent to the evident wishes of these young people?"

"Most willingly," exclaimed the old gentleman, joining our hands again, while I could see his eyes filling with tears as he looked at Matilda.

Why should I dwell upon the rest? why should I tell of the tears of pleasure which ran from the eyes of all, as Matilda and I knelt at the feet of those who now showered blessings upon us, and joined their prayers for that happiness in our future lives for which ample worldly provision had been made by the dying baronet? Alas! however, it was painfully affecting to witness the convulsive sobbings of the regretful Lady Staines, as she contemplated us both, spoke of our present love and future bliss, and thought of what she herself had missed in life.

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What shall I add more?—continued my good host, by this time quite affected with his own story,—that bliss has been well realized, in the course of seven happy years, and now this bright morning, during the short time when my Matilda is gone from me, who, since we left England, has become much attached to these valleys, the pleasure of talking of her in her absence almost compensates for the temporary want of her society; and I shall receive her again with enhanced joy after thus, in fancy and by recollection, going over again the strange events in London connected with our first acquaintance.

My friend had scarcely bestowed a concluding caress upon his daughter, and informed me of the subsequent deaths of Sir Archibald and Mr. Fortesque, and of Lady Staines having entered into a second and more happy marriage, but not with the strange nobleman, who has since run a remarkable race both in England and abroad, when a vehicle drove up the avenue, and in a few moments after, starting from his seat, my host hastened down stairs to welcome back his Matilda. The tender embrace of meetings and of partings of those who truly love each other are always affecting. I turned away my head, for I could not look, and the very tones of the soft English voice of the lady, and the glance of her charming blue eyes, touched me almost to tears, as I thought of those I had left at home, and of the pious bliss of wedded love.

From what I perceived during one interesting hour, which was all that I enjoyed of this lady's society, I could very well account for the enthusiasm of my new friend in speaking of his wife, as well as for the minuteness with which he detailed the particulars of their story; and I left his delightful villa on the Rhine with those comforting sensations with which the mind concludes from actual observation, that in many interesting spots, on the variegated surface of this green earth, there are still enjoyed many quiet hours of virtuous and truly enviable felicity.

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THE FATAL WHISPER.

BY JOHN GALT.

> "Oh the curse of marriage!
> That we can call these delicate creatures ours
> And not their appetites! I'd rather be a toad
> And live upon the vapour of a dungeon,
> Than keep a corner in the thing I love
> For others' use."
>
> OTHELLO.

THE Marina was crowded with company, and the most distinguished of the Palermitan nobility in open carriages were enjoying the gayety of the summer evening, and the refreshing air that breathed gently from the bay. I had seated myself on the stone bench which runs along the dwarf wall, with my back to the sea, enjoying the active and cheerful scene, when a capuchin friar took a place beside me.

He was a middle-aged man, with a pensive cast of countenance, and evidently suffering from infirmity. His appearance, without being remarkable, had less ecclesiastical gravity than is commonly observable among the monks.

In reply to some incidental question which I happened to address to him, he replied in English, and immediately rose and went away. Next evening I seated myself on the same spot; he also returned and again sat down beside me. In that way our acquaintance began and grew to intimacy.

But I will relate his story as he told it. At the time it interested me greatly, and often has it since returned upon my recollection with an indescribable sense of

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sadness, arising more from the feelings which the incidents awakened than the apparent sensibility with which he described them. The remains of a military manner regulated the tone of his voice, and he spoke of them with as much fortitude as if he had been describing the adventures of a campaign in which an old companion had perished. His voice was firm, but there was a restraint in the utterance that made the tale impressive, and, without pain, deeply affecting.

It was, indeed, singular, and I more than once intimated that he had awakened my curiosity; but it was not till one evening, when I happened to inquire how long he had worn the garb of a friar, that he deemed me worthy of his confidence.

"It is convenient," said he, "but it is not on that account I have assumed it;" and then he abruptly added, as if the restraint he had put upon himself had suddenly given way, "I much prefer the convent to any other lodging. The friars are sedate and good men; and although they know I am a Protestant, they never trouble me with any sort of religious controversy."

Though accustomed to his thoughtful physiognomy, it seemed to me that in saying this the cast of his countenance underwent a change, and that he looked more than I had ever before remarked, like one whom adversity had touched with no gentle hand. After a momentary pause he began his story:—

On the return of the army from Alexandria,—said he,—the transport in which I had embarked with several other officers became leaky, and we bore away for Messina, to repair, or to obtain another vessel. On entering the port, being under quarantine, the passengers disembarked at the lazaretto, where they found apartments, and were too happy in taking possession of them, after the vile Egyptian rooms and the discomfort we had suffered in the transport.

The person who attended to receive our daily orders sometimes brought the English newspapers; I read them with an oppressive eagerness, expecting to hear

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something of my friends, but to me they were ever barren; all my companions, one after the other, met with some little notice or paragraph which gave them pleasure, but none such ever appeared to me.

The dulness of the lazaretto, a square court with a cemetery in the area, would of itself have affected the spirits of most men; but the silence of the newspapers towards me seemed more ominous of misfortune, and filled my imagination with apprehensions and vague fears to which neither name nor other cause could be assigned. When the period of the quarantine was complete, and all my companions were joyous at being released, I was irresistibly depressed, and in answer to their raillery could only tell that some unaccountable burden weighed upon my spirits, and would not be shaken off by any resolution.

On the day we were at liberty we dined together, and had several English officers then in the garrison as guests. In the evening we all went to the theatre; the house was crowded. Every box was engaged, which obliged us to take places in the pit. You are aware that owing to the subdivision of the benches in the Sicilian theatres, it sometimes happens that a party is unavoidably separated, the seats being occupied at intervals by other individuals. This took place that night; my friends were dispersed in different parts of the house, and I was by myself in one of the sittings at the end of the last bench.

I had not been long seated when several other officers came in, with a gentleman in plain clothes, who, as I overheard in the course of his conversation with them, had only that afternoon arrived by the packet from England. He had been the schoolfellow of one of the officers, with whom he was gay and free, telling him of their old companions, and also of his own exploits since they had left Eton. Among other things he mentioned that the cause of his coming abroad was an intrigue, in which he had been engaged with a married lady. It had been discovered by the landlady of an inn on the Bath road, who had threatened to disclose the affair to the friends

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of his paramour. "But," said he, "I bought her silence, and have for a few months come out of the way." The name of the lady he did not disclose, indeed refused, but boasted of his success, and of the long time that the guilty intercourse had continued.

This story attracted my particular attention, and yet there was nothing in the circumstances calculated to make any very lasting impression, save only the art and craft of the lady, which he described with contempt and derision, as the result of her experience in deception.

On returning to the hotel from the theatre, which I did alone, before the opera was over, I found, with letters from my wife, a bundle of newspapers. Maria had been for some time, she said, unwell, and had been advised to try the Bath waters; it had, however, so happened that my mother had also been seized with a dangerous illness, which obliged my wife to go hastily to London, where, after waiting some time, she was again advised to return to Bath.

As the letter was written with her wonted tenderness and spirit, I could not but admire the ardour of that filial affection which was so like the earnestness of her love for myself; but when I was about to take up one of the newspapers—it strangely, suddenly, and fearfully flashed across my mind that there was something extraordinary in that journey. In a word, I was wounded with a pang of jealousy, and shook for a time like the aspen. And yet my heart acknowledged that never was a woman more simple in all her ways than Maria—more pure in heart and spirit—more enthusiastic in her affections. The thought, as it crossed my imagination, was as a black demon passing between me and the heavens, eclipsing the unclouded sun. Still I could not reason myself from the horror of the suspicion, which, like an envenomed dart, rankled in my bosom. It seemed as if the augury which had previously darkened my spirit was confirmed—I arose from my seat—I traversed the room in distraction, and abandoned myself, without reason, to the wildest imaginations.

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When I had for some time given scope to the full force of the dreadful passion which had so demoniacally possessed me, the cloud passed from my understanding, and I became more calm. I felt even repugnance at myself for having done such injury to my wife in thought; and remorse, like drops of molten sulphur, for the injustice, dropped in greater anguish than fire upon my heart. I soon after again grew more rational, and calmly opened the paper.

For some time nothing interesting attracted my notice, but among the gossiping paragraphs I discovered two lines evidently inserted by authority, for there was a tint of satire in them praising the filial devotion of the lady of a gallant officer then with the army in Egypt; and how, though herself an invalid, she had made a journey to London to comfort his aged mother, who was less in need of consolation than herself.

This sentence was as a shower of bullets in my bosom. The paroxysm of jealousy returned, barbed with a hateful possibility. But I may spare you and myself the description of an agony which language can never express. That too, however, after a time, also subsided. I again had recourse to another number of the newspaper, and in it there was a dignified answer to the slander implied in the wording and markings of the paragraph that had so disturbed me.

But it failed to sooth, for the gentleman had described the craft of his paramour.

This made my case worse—no adequate idea can be given of my thoughts that night. I retired to my own chamber—I wept, I vowed the hoarsest revenge. But what could I do—what proof had I to charge my rival with having dishonoured my family? Him I could not even address. The night was spent in a whirlwind, and I could bring myself to no determination.

At daybreak I went to a convent, where I had then a friend, who, under the name of Anselmo, had long resided there. I had known him when, previously to the Egyptian expedition, I had been quartered in Messina; he was a sensible sedate character, possessed of a judi-

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cious knowledge of the world. To him I confided my hideous apprehensions—and when I had ended the impassioned narrative, he remained for some time thoughtful, and then said—

"Go to your hotel, let no one have any cause to suspect your fears, and come back to me in the afternoon, by which time I shall be prepared to offer you some advice."

I did as he suggested—fortunately my companions, in the gayety of their spirits, had resolved to visit the environs. I feigned a headache, declined to go with them, and thus was left undisturbed.

Whether Father Anselmo had in the mean time consulted with any friend on my unhappy case was not disclosed, but when, at the time appointed, I returned to the convent, I met him at the portal, as he was taking leave of another elderly friar, who, as I entered, eyed me with a melancholy look. I passed, however, on, and was immediately followed by Anselmo, who, instead of conducting me back to his cell, led me into the chapel, which at the time was empty.—It is a gorgeous sanctuary; the shrines and monuments numerous, and though the lighted altars sent forth a dim splendour, there was something in the air and aspect of the place which weighed upon my heart as if the tranquillity which reigned around had been palpable.

When we had walked in silence to a confessional, which stood at the east end of the chapel, near the high altar, Father Anselmo went into the chair—"I am not," said he, "so ingrained with our religion as to deem this an occasion that will not sanction the indecorum—kneel to me as if you were a penitent, and I will answer you as sincerely as if the sin which has brought us here were of your own commission. Kneel, no one will then interrupt us, if your agitation master your fortitude."

I knelt, scarce knowing what I did. When I had bent forward about a minute to the aurical of the confessional, Father Anselmo said—

"There is a cause to justify you to suspect."

I groaned with anguish, and could make no reply.

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"But let no one still suspect the secret of your heart—write to your wife as if you never questioned her fidelity—go home with all the speed you can—but before you see her, go to the inn where the discovery was made. The landlady was bribed to silence—a better price will unlock her tongue—and your own sagacity will then direct you what should be done, if it should prove the adulteress was your wife."

"She shall die," cried I aloud, starting in an agony on my feet;—at that instant the newly arrived stranger with his friend the officer entered the church—I cannot describe the tempest of my soul at that moment.

"It is he," I exclaimed, pointing him out to the friar.

"Compose yourself," was his answer. "Let us question him—I am calmer than you: leave the business to me."

Father Anselmo then went towards the stranger and his friend, and addressed them as strangers, pointing out to their attention several of the altarpieces which were considered distinguished specimens of art; I followed close behind him, but said nothing, nor was I capable of joining two sentences—I attempted, however, to enter into conversation with the officer who accompanied the stranger. What he must have thought of me I can now well imagine,—my tongue at the time gave utterance to words which had no connexion with my mind. Father Anselmo afterward inquired what I had been saying—I had no remembrance of it, but he mentioned that he had several times observed the officer turn round abruptly, and look at me with an apprehensive eye.

Father Anselmo himself, in the mean time, was particularly courteous to the stranger, and after we had taken a turn or two in the chapel I grew more collected, and went closer to him. Immediately I perceived that he changed his manner; his eyes became vivid and searching, and in conducting the stranger along the side-altars to look at the pictures particularly, he frequently cast upon him a sudden glance, especially when he ob-

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served his attention arrested by any remarkable figure among the female saints. But the stranger inspected them all with equal indifference.

Father Anselmo then affected to be a critic, and discoursed of the colouring of the several pictures with the affectation of a cicerone. It seemed to me that his object in this was to ascertain if the taste of the stranger preferred any particular colour, but in this too he failed He could derive nothing to assist his curious metaphysical investigation, for I soon perceived that his endeavour was to find out some key to the associations of the stranger's mind, such as skilful players at the game of Twenty-Questions sometimes obtain—and are thereby enabled to discover the most occult thoughts of their antagonists.

The stranger and the officer his companion then went away.

"I suspect," said Father Anselmo, as they left the church, "that you are disturbing yourself without cause. The intrigue which that gentleman has accidentally disclosed has been but a young man's folly—he has no remorse for what he has done. The woman deserves not your anxiety, if she prove your wife; she must be bad, and their connexion has been a mere animal indulgence, which leaves no sting of guilt behind. I have tried him by all these pictures, and even in the one there of the Roman lady listening to the preaching of the young priest, who became enamoured of her, and who resisted the temptation because she was married; but he was not in the slightest degree moved, even though I interpreted the legend as much like the story you had overheard as possible. Think, therefore, no more of any offence towards yourself in this affair, but go home and get the fact proved as soon as possible, to be rid of one that must be familiar with voluptuousness."

The words of Father Anselmo seemed oracular. I knew not their import, nor the mode of his reflection, though I comprehended the scope of both. It was, however, impossible that I could, by any resolution, shake off the love which I cherished for Maria. I

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recalled to mind her beauty and simplicity, and that graceful piety so unlike the gross ardour that the stranger had described; but the storm of my jealousy was over, and a deep and exquisite sorrow took possession of my bosom. Why, however, attempt to describe an anguish that must be felt, not imagined, and which threatens to return as the remembrance is refreshed, by recalling the visible circumstances in which it was first experienced? Endeavour to conceive for yourself, and when you have done so with all the powers of your imagination, how faint and feeble will it be to the reality of what I suffered!

Two days after I left my fellow-passengers, and returned to England by the same packet that had brought out the destroyer of my peace. Immediately on my arrival at Falmouth, I set off for the inn where the iniquity had taken place.

Having been then for several years absent from England, I affected a curiosity respecting the domestic occurrences of the kingdom, which was not felt, and perceiving that there was no bustle in the house, on pretence of conversing with the landlady on these topics, I begged her to make tea for me. In the course of her doing so, my conversation was wild and desultory, and several times I observed her suddenly gaze at me. Gradually I brought the various subjects I had affected to speak of to a point, and then I earnestly told her, and with considerable emotion, that I had some cause for jealousy, and that she must excuse the distraction of mind with which she saw me agitated.

Having thus interested her feelings, I then turned the conversation with all my ingenuity on the time, and finally the place of guilt, relating several circumstances which the stranger, Sir Mandeville Webster, had mentioned concerning the discovery, and in which she had borne a part, even to the sum by which he had purchased her silence. Her emotion increasing to amazement and alarm convinced me that he had told no untrue tale, but still she only affected to grieve in sympathy for my distress. I was, however, satisfied with

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the testimony of my witness, and as to have offered her money for a more circumstantial disclosure would have been improper, I abruptly quitted her and proceeded directly to London. The expiring embers of affection for Maria prevented me from disclosing my name, feebly hoping that some explicable mistake might possibly yet be discovered.

My reception by Maria was with all the flutter and fondness of pure and fervent affection. Oh heavens! but her blandishments were as the foldings of a serpent—my anguish more dreadful than the agonies of Laocoon!—but I stifled my disgust. She spoke of her children with the admiration of a mother. She brought them to me with delight, but I discerned that she once or twice looked at me with a strange speculation in her eyes. In all, save in those disastrous glances, she was what she had ever been, but my heart, though not altogether alienated, was perplexed, and its throbs were as the stingings of scorpions.

Craft and cunning were never so perfectly performed as on that fatal morning. It was impossible to look upon her with suspicion. Innocence was in all her gestures; but once I saw her hastily turn her head to conceal a sudden gush of tears. After this could I doubt? I flung my love to the winds.

A brief embarrassed pause took place for a moment; without saying a word, I ordered the nursery-maid to convey the children to their grandmother, and then sternly remained in silence till they were gone. Maria sat pale and amazed; she asked no question—perhaps was unable. She saw the children depart without emotion and without caress. Never was detected guilt so visibly confounded.

When the carriage with the children and the servant had left the house, I then said with a stern voice, but my heart wept blood from every pore, "Madam, answer me a few questions."

She made no reply, but I continued—

"When did you become acquainted with Sir Mandeville Webster?"

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She made no reply.

"Was it in your journey between Bath and London?"

She made no reply.

"Answer me, unhappy woman; I would, for your own sake, spare you from the tongues of the world,—answer me!"—and in saying these words I rose; she at the same time also started up, and extending her arms in phrensy, burst into a wild, demoniac fit of mirthless laughter, so shrill, so hideous, so unlike all human sound, that I shudder with horror as I think of it. Then suddenly pausing, she looked solemnly at me for a moment, and dropped senseless on the floor.

Humanity and some feeling of withered tenderness would not allow me to leave her till her maid, with the assistance of the other women, had recalled her senses. But as soon as I observed the dawn of returning reason I left the house and proceeded to her father's, where I found his lordship at home, in his library alone. I hastened into his presence, but as I entered the room, my feelings overcame me, and I threw myself on his shoulder, unable to speak.

After this paroxysm had subsided, he requested me to be seated, and, I thought with an air of coldness and distance, inquired what so agitated me, and when I had returned to England.

His manner was additional proof—it was as if he knew and connived at the guilt. He is acquainted with my dishonour, I inwardly said, but his regard for a child to whom he was ever devoted has made him take her part. The thought passed through my mind like electricity, and nerved me to be firm. Accordingly, collecting myself, I told him what I had the misfortune to learn. I told him all—how it accidentally first reached my hearing in the theatre, to the examination of the landlady, and the dreadful scene I had just witnessed.

During the whole recital he sat as silent as his daughter, but it was the silence of attention, and not, like hers, of consternation—for he was a calm, self-sustained character, seldom off his guard, and shrewd in his knowledge of mankind.

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When I had closed my wild story, he made no remark, but rising, walked several times across the library. I conceived that he was meditating what reply to make, and waited with resolution; at last he stopped opposite to me, and said emphatically,

"This is a strange business—it is not impossible to be true." At this expression I saw his countenance change, and a tear rush into his eyes, which he hastily wiped away.

The sight of that most respectable, and in all things serene and self-possessed old man so affected, touched me with exquisite pity.—I rose, and being now certain that nothing could change the woful fact, I said abruptly that while I remained in town my home would be at my mother's with the children, but that the unfortunate Maria would require his care.

"You have lost no time since your arrival," replied he, a little proudly as I thought, "but I will call on you in the course of the day."

We then parted. There was nothing in this sad interview to make me question what I had heard; but, on the contrary, a strong confirmation of the justice of my jealousy. It was a spur in the side of my intent, to have the legal preliminaries for a divorce instituted without delay.

By this time agitation had exhausted my strength, insomuch that when I reached my mother's house I was seriously indisposed, and the children with their gladness and innocent caresses augmented my dejection. My mother was not at home; the maid had described to her the frame of mind in which she had seen me, and the old lady had instantly gone to my house. I was not, however, acquainted with this circumstance at the time, and concluded that her absence was in consequence of her reluctance to see me, forgetting, in that disconsolate moment, that the mother's heart ever prompts her to fly to her offspring in distress. But a deplorable fatality was upon me, and every thing that took place on that eventful day ministered to the sharpening of my affliction.

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After waiting some time for the return of Lady Osprey, I called in the nursery maid, and learned where she had gone. With boiling veins, and a head incapable of combining two thoughts, I resolved to go in quest of her, but in that crisis she returned; on reaching my house, she was informed that Maria had left it in a hackney-coach without saying where she intended to go. The servants were all alarmed, and no one could give the slightest clew to the mysterious passion in which, after so long an absence, I had returned.

I then told her ladyship of the discovery, and at the same time Lord Baronsdale was announced—he too had been at my house, and had been informed of the manner in which Maria had withdrawn herself. His look was firm but stern; he had summoned all his fortitude, and while it was evident that his spirit was writhing with a thousand wounds, his countenance had an air of resolution and sadness.

"Let us not," said he, "waste time in idle talk, your happiness and mine are equally at stake; I have thought on all you have told me; there may be some error—and we must begin the investigation anew. I have a postchaise at the door,—you must go with me to that landlady, she shall not earn her bribe from our credulity."

I made no answer, but seized my hat to accompany him in an instant,—he wrung his hands with emotion; another messenger was first despatched to my house, and also to his lordship's, to ascertain if Maria had returned—but they brought back no tidings.

We then resolved to proceed in the chaise, and reached the inn early in the evening, where, in passing to a parlour, we met Maria!—I had before this received proof enough, but the sight of her there crowned the evidence.—Why had she come to that house? I had not mentioned any thing to her of my having been there. By what miraculous accident had she come, and for what other purpose than to deal with the bribed landlady? rushed in phrensy on my mind.

Before I had time to make any remark Maria pulled the bell, and requested the presence of the landlady.

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and on her entrance demanded with a steady voice if she was the Mistress Osprey of whom she had spoken to me.

The good woman, before answering, looked confused, and then said, hesitatingly, that she was not, and I exclaimed with indignation—

"These tricks, Maria, will serve you no longer. How came you here?—by what instinct have you thought of this house? How much was your bribe? Sir Mandeville Webster's was a hundred guineas."

Maria made no answer, she only looked at me, but the landlady started at the name of Sir Mandeville, and I turned to Lord Baronsdale.

"It would not be expensive," said I, "to get any evidence desired from this woman."

"You are right," said his lordship, with a sigh, and covered his face with his handkerchief, exclaiming, with great fervour, "Oh, Maria, to what devil have you sold yourself?—to look so innocent—to be so plausible!—and—"

"You are not satisfied?" was her reply. "Let Osprey take the woman in his chaise and proceed with her to Bath; and, my lord, till I am proved guilty, give me your protection; I will go with you."

The energy with which this was said strengthened the impression which so many circumstances had made. It was unlike the gentle and retiring Maria to show herself so decisive.

The journey to Bath was arranged as she proposed; the landlady at first made some scruple, but it was stifled by the words "You must," from Maria.

We travelled all night, but slowly, as it was desired, or rather ordered, by Maria, that we should not reach Bath till an advanced hour in the morning, and that no opportunity should be afforded for her to have any further communication with the landlady. I was spellbound—I could not divine her intent—but she appeared animated by some extraordinary purpose, and she never once appeared to notice me.

When we reached Bath, instead of proceeding to any hotel, she directed the chaise to a particular house in

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Pultney-street, and ours to follow. On reaching the door, the instant that it was opened she directed her father to come in with her, and the landlady and me to follow. She then, with the same apparent equanimity, ordered the servant to bid Lady Heatherstone, his mistress, come to her for a single moment—we were still standing when the lady entered.

The landlady, on seeing her ladyship, started, and turning suddenly to me, before any other could utter a word, said, with an agitated voice, "This is the Mistress Osprey."

The lady instantly turned pale, and gazing at the landlady, whom she at once recognised, said—

"You mistake, I am Lady Heatherstone."

"Oh, why did you add the guilt of falsehood to your sin!" cried the contrite landlady; "you told me yourself your name, on the vile morning of that night when you and this other lady stopped at our house."

Lady Heatherstone rejoined—"You are in some mistake; but what does this mean?—why, ladies and gentlemen, are you here, and what is the object of these questions?"

Lord Baronsdale said nothing, but, with his mouth pursed, seemed waiting some result.

"Madam," after a momentary pause, said I, "when I last saw your friend, Sir Mandeville Webster—"

"Oh, Webster! do you know him?" was her exclamation of astonishment, and she flung herself on a sofa, and covered her face with her hands.

I rushed towards Maria to catch her in my embrace, but her spirit was gone—I had only her corpse in my arms.

From that hour I have but existed—our unhappy children are both dead. Had they lived, perhaps, I might have endeavoured to resume my profession, but the eldest only survived a year, and the second scarcely another. Since that time I have been but a breathing thing—an abstract of humanity—and the solitude of the cloister has been my home. Had we possessed any such asylum in England I had not come to Sicily. But it matters not—all places are now alike to me.

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THE SLEEPLESS WOMAN.

BY WILLIAM JERDAN.*

CHAPTER I.

"Blessed be he that first invented sleep, for it covers a man all over like a mantle."

Sancho Panza, passim.

Heavily set in massive brass, whose rich and ingenious carving was tarnished and dull, a ponderous lamp swung from a ceiling blackened by its smoke. Every thing in the room spoke of time, but of time that had known no change. Knights, whose armour was, at the latest, of two centuries back—ladies, in dresses from which their descendants started in dismay—looked out from the discoloured tapestry; and the floor, dark with age, added to the gloom. Beside the hearth, whose fire, from the rain beating down the huge chimney, burned every moment dimmer, sat two old domestics. The man in a scarlet gown, and a belt, from which hung a heavy bunch of keys, was the seneschal; and opposite was his wife, in a brown silk dress, and a string of ebony beads, which she was busily employed in counting. Between them was a small antique oak table, where a flask and two bell-mouthed glasses appeared temptations which, it must be owned, somewhat interrupted the telling of the beads. In the centre of the chamber stood an immense hearse-like bed; the purple

* Editor of The Literary Gazette, &c. &c.

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velvet curtains swept to the ground, and at each corner drooped a large plume of black ostrich-feathers. On this bed lay a little withered old man, apparently in the last extremity of age, and very close upon the border of death. His spare form was hidden in an ample black robe, fastened round the waist with a white girdle, on which were graved strange characters in red; and on his breast was a white square, covered with stars and signs wrought in gold. The old man's face was ghastly pale, and rendered yet paler by the contrast of his black scull-cap, which was drawn down even to his gray and shagged eyebrows. But the features were restless; and the small keen eyes, though fast losing their brightness, were full of anxiety. The wind shook the tall narrow windows, and howled in the old trees of the avenue; at every fresh gust the baron's impatience seemed to increase—for what we are telling relates to the Baron de Launaye.

"'Tis a rough night," muttered he; "but Adolphe is as rough a rider—and a dangerous road; but I am the first De Launaye who ever drew bridle for that. And then my summons—it was sure to reach him; ay, though alone, in the midnight bower of the mistress whose name and his suspicion had never coupled together even in a dream—even though consciousness were drowned in the crimson flowing of the wine—though sleeping as men sleep after battle, pillowed on the body of their deadliest enemy, or of their nearest and dearest friend—my summons would be borne on his inmost soul. But will he come, at the bidding of his dying uncle?—will Adolphe, he, the only human being whom I ever loved—will he or will he not come?"

The question was answered even at the moment it was breathed. The horn at the castle-gate was blown impatiently—the fall of the drawbridge was heard—a moment's pause, and a light foot sprang up the oaken staircase with all the speed of haste and youth. The door opened, and in rushed a young cavalier. The white plumes of his cap were drenched with wet—the diamond clasp that fastened them was dim with damp

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—but his bright auburn hair glistened with the rain-drops. Hastily flinging his riding-cloak, heavy with moisture, to the ground, the stranger sprang to the bed-side. A gleam of human love, of human joy, passed over the old man's face, as tenderly and gently his nephew asked of his tidings, and expressed such hopes as affection hopes when hope there is none.

"Child of my love," murmured the dying baron, "for whose sake only I have ever given one thought to the things of earth, bear yet a moment with the feeble wretch who but a brief while will stand between you and the title of your ancestors and wealth. Many a prince of your mother's house would think his kingdom overpaid if purchased by its half. You are young—I never was—my heart, even in boyhood, was old with premature knowledge. You have that beauty the want of which has made my life a curse—you have that strength of body the want of which has paralyzed my strength of mind. I have doubted if happiness dwells on this evil earth—I will not doubt when I hope for yours. You will hear me called necromancer: out on the base fools who malign that which they understand not, and would bring down the lofty aim of science, the glorious dream of virtue, to their own low level! You will hear me called miser: Adolphe, have you ever found me so?"

"My father—my more than father!" passionately exclaimed the young man, hiding his face on the pillow, as if ashamed of the violence of mortal grief, in the presence of one so soon to be immortal.

"Adolphe," continued his uncle, "you have heard, though not from me—for I sought not to weigh down your ardent mind with all that has pressed upon me with the burden of hopelessness, and long has the knowledge been mine—that the fetters of clay are too heavy for the spirit. Your young hand was fitter for the lance than the crucible; and the bridle-rein would have been ill exchanged for the lettered scroll. But something I know of that future, into which even the sage can look but dimly. Adolphe, the only question I asked was for

thee! Alas! the vanity of such wisdom! It has told of danger that menaces, but not of the skill that avoids. My child, evil came into the world with woman, and in her is bound up the evil of your destiny. Vain as the glance they throw on the polished steel of their mirror—false as the vow they make for the pleasure of breaking—inconstant as the wind, which changes from point to point, and for whose change no philosophy hath ever discovered a cause: shun them, Adolphe, as you would disloyalty to your king, flight from your enemy, or falsehood to your friend."

The old man's voice became inaudible, and his head sank on Adolphe's shoulder:—"Margarita, water—or, Jacques, give me the wine." The youth tried to pour a few drops into the baron's mouth. The dying man motioned back the glass, and looking in the cavalier's face with a strong expression of affection and anxiety, muttered something of "woman" and "danger"—"bright," "eyes," "bright," "beware"—these were his last broken words. He expired.

CHAPTER II.

Contrary to the charitable expectations of his neighbours, the Baron de Launaye was buried with all the rites of the church; the holy water was sprinkled on the corse, and the holy psalm sung over the coffin. A marble tablet marked his grave; and there the moonlight slept as lovingly as ever it did on the sinless tomb of saint or martyr. The new Baron de Launaye lamented his uncle's death in a very singular manner, for he was his heir—and the young and the rich have not much time for regret. But Adolphe (he was remarkable from a child for his memory) could not forget the kindness—and more than kindness—the love that his uncle had lavished on the little orphan who,

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noble and penniless at the age of five years, was left dependent on his bounty. However, sorrow cannot—indeed nothing in this world can—last for ever. Adolphe's grief became first only sad; next, melancholy; thirdly, calm; and fourthly, settled down into a respectful remembrance, and a resolve to bear his uncle's last words in mind. Indeed, the muttered, vague, and uncertain prediction quite haunted him.

"I am sure," said he, in one of his many pondering moods, "I am sure my past experience confirms his words. I never got into a scrape but a woman was the cause. I had been in my outset at court, page to the Duke Forté d'Imhault, and, gone with him on that splendid embassy to Russia, had he not been displeased with my awkwardness in fastening the duchess's sandal."

And he laughed as he said this: who in the world could guess why the loss of his appointment should make the young baron laugh!

"And then, who caused the duel between me and my Pylades, the Marquis de Lusignan, but that little jilt Mdlle. Laure? However, my sword only grazed his arm: he wore an exquisite blue silk scarf, and we were better friends than ever. Oh, my uncle was right: women were born to be our torment."

Still was this conviction impressed on his mind like a duty. Yet he could not help thinking that a few bright eyes would light up the old hall better than the huge brazen lamps which now served to make darkness visible. From thinking of the pleasantness of such an illumination, he began to think of its difficulties; and the difficulties of the project soon referred only to the place. One thought suggests another; and from thinking how many obstacles opposed the introduction of bright eyes and sweet smiles into the castle, he arrived at the conclusion, how easily they were to be obtained in other parts.

To say the truth, Paris became daily more familiar to his mind's eye; and, as he justly observed, staying at the dull old castle could do his uncle no good, and he was quite sure it did himself none. Now, in spite

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of philanthropy, people are not so very fond of doing good gratuitously; but, to be sure, such doctrines were not so much discussed in those days as they are in ours, though the practice was about the same. Sometimes he argued with himself, "It is as well to be out of harm's way;"—and the prediction and a cold shudder came together. But we are ready enough to dare the danger we do not know: and though a few years of Parisian life had placed the nephew's early on a level with the uncle's late experience, touching the evil inherent in womanhood, nevertheless Adolphe supposed their bad qualities might be borne, at all events, better than the dulness of the Château de Launaye.

One day riding with his bridle on his horse's neck, meditating whether his next ride should not be direct to Paris, a most uncommon spectacle in that unfrequented part of the country attracted his attention. This was a large lumbering coach, drawn by six horses, whose rich harness and housings bore the crest in gold—a lynx rampant. A very natural curiosity (by-the-by, all curiosity is natural enough) made him look in at the window. Was there ever a face half so beautiful as that of the girl who, like himself, actuated by natural curiosity, looked out as he looked in? The black silk wimple was drawn over her head, but allowed a very red upper lip, an exquisite Grecian nose, and a most brilliant pair of eyes to be seen. Our young cavalier sat as if he had been stupified. This is a very common effect of love at first. It goes off, however—so it did with Adolphe. His first act on recovering his senses was to gallop after the coach. He spurred on, and caught a second glance of the most radiant orbs that ever revolved in light. Large, soft, clear, and hazel, as those of a robin—they were bright and piercing as those of a falcon. Certainly De Launaye had never seen such eyes before, or at least none that ever took such an effect upon him.

He ate no dinner that day—walked by moonlight on the terrace—and the only thing which excited his attention was the seneschal's information, that the Marquise

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de Surville and her granddaughter were come to stay for some months at their château.

"They could not have done that in the late baron's time—the Lord be good unto his soul!" And the old man forthwith commenced the history of some mysterious feud between the two families, in which the deceased Baron Godfred had finally remained victor.

To this tedious narrative of ancient enmities Adolphe was little inclined to listen. "A name and an estate are all our ancestors have a right to leave behind them. The saints preserve us from a legacy of their foes! Nothing could be worse,—except their friends."

The next morning the baron arranged his suit of sables with unusual care, though it must be confessed he always took care enough.

"Pray Heaven the marquise may be of my way of thinking respecting the quarrels of our forefathers! Some old ladies have terrible memories," were Adolphe's uppermost ideas as he rode over the drawbridge at the Château de Surville, which had been promptly lowered to his summons;—their only neighbour, he had thought it but courteous to offer his personal respects. How much more cheerful did the saloon, with its hangings of sea-green silk, worked in gold, seem than his own hall, encumbered with the dusty trophies of his ancestors. To be sure, the young baron was not at that moment a very fair judge; for the first thing that met him on his entrance was a glance from the same pair of large bright eyes which had been haunting him for the last four-and-twenty hours.

The grandmother was as stern a looking old gentlewoman as ever had knights in armour for ancestors: still, her eyes, also bright, clear, and piercing, somewhat resembled those of her granddaughter. On the rest of her face time had wrought "strange disfeatures." She was silent; and, after the first compliments, resumed the volume she had been reading on the baron's appearance. It was a small book, bound in black velvet, with gold clasps, richly wrought. Adolphe took it for granted it was her breviary; and inwardly con-

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cluded how respectable is that piety in an old woman which leaves the young one under her charge quite at liberty! The visiter's whole attention was soon devoted to the oriel window where sat the beautiful Clotilde de Surville. The Baron de Launaye piqued himself on fastidious taste in women and horses: he had had some experience in both. But Clotilde was faultless. There she leaned, with the splendour of day full upon her face; it fell upon her pure complexion like joy upon the heart, and the sunbeams glittered amid the thick ringlets till every curl was edged with gold. Her dress alone seemed capable of improvement; but it is as well to leave something to the imagination, and there was ample food for Adolphe's, in picturing the change that would be wrought upon Clotilde by a Parisian milliner. "This comes," thought he, "of being brought up in an old German castle."

For very shame he at last rose; when, with a grim change of countenance, meant for a smile, the marquise asked him to stay dinner. It is a remark not the less true for being old (though now-a-days opinions are all on the change), that love-making is a thing "to hear, and not to tell." We shall therefore leave the progress of the wooing, and come to the *dénouement*, which was the most proper possible, viz. marriage. Adolphe had been the most devoted of lovers, and Clotilde had given him a great deal of modest encouragement; that is, her bright eyes had often wandered in search of his, and the moment they had found them, had dropped to the ground; and whenever he entered the room, a blush had come into her cheek, like the light into the pearl, filling it with the sweet hues of the rose. Never did love-affair proceed more prosperously. The old seneschal was the only person who grumbled. He begged leave to remind the young baron that it was not showing proper respect to his ancestors not to take up their quarrels.

"But things are altered since the days when lances were attached to every legacy," returned Adolphe.

"We are altering every thing now-a-days," replied

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the old man; "I don't see, however, that we are a bit the better off."

"I, at all events, expect happiness," replied his master, "in this change of my condition."

"Ay, ay, so we all do before we are married: what we find after there is no use in saying, for two reasons; first, you would not believe me; secondly, my wife might hear what I'm telling."

"Ah!" exclaimed the young baron, "the caution that marriage teaches! If it were only for the prudence I should acquire, it would be worth my while to marry."

"Alas! rashness never yet wanted a reason. My poor young master! the old marquise and her dark-eyed granddaughter have taken you in completely."

"Taken me in!" ejaculated De Launaye, angrily; "why, you old fool, were this a mere match of interest I might thank my stars for such a lucky chance. Young, beautiful, high-born, and rich, Clotilde has but to appear at the court, and ensure a much higher alliance than mine. What motive could they have?"

"I do not know; but when I don't know people's motives, I always suppose the worst," replied the obstinate Dominique.

"Charitable," laughed his master.

"And besides," resumed the seneschal, "the old marquise plagued her husband into the grave; and I dare say her granddaughter means to do as much for you."

"A novel reason, at all events, for taking a husband," said De Launaye, "in order that you may plague him to death afterward."

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CHAPTER III.

WELL, the wedding-day arrived at last. De Launaye could have found some fault with his bride's costume, but for her face. There was a stiffness in the rigid white satin, and the ruff was at least two inches too high —indeed he did not see any necessity for the ruff at all; they had been quite out some years at Paris. However, he said nothing, remembering that a former hint on the subject of dress had not been so successful as its merits deserved. He had insinuated, and that in a compliment too, a little lowering of the ruff before, as a mere act of justice to the ivory throat, when Clotilde had rejoined, answering in a tone which before marriage was gentle reproof (a few months after it would have sounded like reproach), that she hoped "the Baron de Launaye would prefer propriety in his wife to display." The sense of the speech was forgotten in its sentiment; a very usual occurrence by-the-by. However, the bride looked most beautiful; her clear, dark eyes swam in light—the liquid brilliancy of happiness—the brightness, but not the sadness of tears. The ceremony was over, the priest and the marquise had given their b'essings; the latter also added some excellent advice, which was not listened to with all the attention it deserved. The young couple went to their own castle in a new and huge coach, every one of whose six horses wore white and silver favours. Neighbours they had none, but a grand feast was given to the domestics; and Dominique, at his master's express orders, broached a pipe of Bourdeaux. "I can't make my vassals," said De Launaye, "as happy as myself; but I can make them drunk, and that is something towards it."

The day darkened into night; and here, according

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to all regular precedents in romance, hero and heroine ought to be left to themselves; but there never yet was a rule without an exception. However, to infringe upon established custom as little as possible, we will enter into no details of how pretty the bride looked in her nightcap, but proceed forthwith to the baron's first sleep. He dreamed that the sun suddenly shone into his chamber. Dazzled by the glare he awoke, and found the bright eyes of his bride gazing tenderly on his face. Weary as he was, still he remembered how uncourteous it would be to lie sleeping while she was so wide awake, and he forthwith roused himself as well as he could. Many persons say they can't sleep in a strange bed; perhaps this might be the case with his bride; and in new situations people should have all possible allowance made for them.

They rose early the following morning, the baroness bright-eyed and blooming as usual, the baron pale and abattu. They wandered through the castle; De Launaye told of his uncle's prediction.

"How careful I must be of you," said the bride, smiling, "I shall be quite jealous."

Night came, and again Adolphe was wakened from his first sleep by Clotilde's bright eyes. The third night arrived, and human nature could bear no more.

"Good God, my dearest!" exclaimed the husband, "do you never sleep?"

"Sleep!" replied Clotilde, opening her large bright eyes, till they were even twice their usual size and brightness. "Sleep! one of my noble race sleep! I never slept in my life."

"She never sleeps!" ejaculated the baron, sinking back on his pillow in horror and exhaustion.

It had been settled that the young couple should forthwith visit Paris—thither they at once proceeded. The beauty of the baroness produced a most marvellous sensation even in that city of sensations. Nothing was heard of for a week but the enchanting eyes of the Baroness de Launaye. A diamond necklace of a new

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pattern was invented in her honour, and called *ces beaux yeux de Clotilde.*

"Those eyes," said a prince of the blood, whose taste in such matters had been cultivated by some years of continual practice, "those eyes of Mde. de Launaye will rob many of our young gallants of their rest."

"Very true," briefly replied her husband.

Well, the baroness shone like a meteor in every scene, while the baron accompanied her, the spectre of his former self. Sallow, emaciated, everybody said he was going into a consumption. Still it was quite delightful to witness the devotedness of his wife—she could scarcely bear him a moment out of her sight.

At length they left Paris, accompanied by a gay party, for their château. But brilliant as were these guests, nothing distracted the baroness's attention from her husband, whose declining health became every hour more alarming. One day, however, the young Chevalier de Ronsarde,—he, the conqueror of a thousand hearts—the besieger of a thousand more—whose conversation was that happy mixture of flattery and scandal which is the *beau idéal* of dialogue,—engrossed Mde. de Launaye's attention; and her husband took the opportunity of slipping away unobserved. He hastened into a gloomy avenue—the cedars, black with time and age, met like night overhead, and far and dark did their shadows fall on the still and deep lake beside. Worn, haggard, with a timorous and hurried, yet light step, the young baron might have been taken for one of his own ancestors, permitted for a brief period to revisit his home on earth, but invested with the ghastliness and the gloom of the grave.

"She never sleeps!" exclaimed the miserable Adolphe—"she never sleeps! day and night her large bright eyes eat like fire into my heart." He paused, and rested for support against the trunk of one of the old cedars. "Oh, my uncle, why did not your prophecy, when it warned me against danger, tell me distinctly in what the danger consisted? To have a wife who never

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sleeps! Dark and quiet lake, how I envy the stillness of your depths—the shadows which rest upon your waves!"

At this moment a breath of wind blew a branch aside—a sunbeam fell upon the baron's face; he took it for the eyes of his wife. Alas! his remedy lay temptingly before him—the still, the profound, the shadowy lake. De Launaye took one plunge—it was into eternity. Two days he was missing—the third his lifeless body floated on the heavy waters. The Baron de Launaye had committed suicide, and the bright-eyed baroness was left a disconsolate widow.

Such is the tale recorded in the annals of the house of De Launaye. Some believe it entirely, justly observing there is nothing too extraordinary to happen. Others (for there always will be people who affect to be wiser than their neighbours) say that the story is an ingenious allegory—and that the real secret of the Sleepless Lady was jealousy. Now, if a jealous wife can't drive a man out of his mind and into a lake, we do not know what can!

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DRAMATIC SCENES,

FOUNDED ON

VICTOR HUGO'S CELEBRATED TRAGEDY OF HERNANI.

BY LORD FRANCIS LEVESON GOWER.*

SCENE,

An open Court in Sarragossa. On the left, the walls of the house of SILVA, *with a balcony; on the right, houses and streets. Here and there an occasional light in the windows.*

Enter DON CARLOS, *with* DON SANCHEZ, DON MATHIAS, *and* DON RICARDO, *Courtiers, wrapped in long cloaks.*

DON CARLOS.

This is the place! My heart beats high. No light
Yet in her lattice—all beside are bright.
All but the one which I wish, in vain,
To see her taper.†

DON SANCHEZ.

Let us speak again
Of that same traitor who deserved to die;
And yet your highness suffered him to fly,
And thereby cheat the hangman.

* Author of the translation of Goethe's Faust, the Camp of Wallenstein, Poems, &c. &c.

† The previous part of the drama is chiefly occupied by the efforts of DON CARLOS, King of Spain (afterward Charles, fifth emperor), to obtain the love of DOÑA SOL DE SILVA, whom her aged kinsman and guardian, the DUC DE SILVA, means to wed—but both rivalled by HERNANI, at present a bandit chief. The following scene commence by a second attempt of the king to obtain, by imitating the signal of her lover, an interview with the lady.

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DON CARLOS.

As you say.

DON MATHIAS.

Maybe the bandits' chief!

DON CARLOS.

Perhaps he may.
The chief or not, no leader e'er was seen,
No king, of prouder gait or lordlier mien.

DON SANCHEZ.

His name?

DON CARLOS.

Er—Fer—Some name which ends in *i*.

DON SANCHEZ.

Perhaps Hernani?

DON CARLOS.

Yes.

DON SANCHEZ.

'Tis he!

DON MATHIAS.

'Tis he!

DON SANCHEZ.

And can your highness what he said recall?

* * * * *

DON CARLOS.

This is not the point which makes the strife;
I want the gallant's mistress—not his life.
Two windows dark. With what a lingering gait
Old Time can shuffle on to those who wait!
The moment we enjoy, his step is fleet.

[*The last light in the window is extinguished.*

The last is out, and darkness rules the street.

[*Turning to* DONNA SOL'S *window.*

Accursed lattice, when will you be bright?
Shine out, fair star, and dissipate the night.
Has it struck twelve?

DON RICARDO.

'Twill soon.

DON CARLOS.

We must proceed
To work, or others may prevent the deed.

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[*A light appears in* DONNA SOL'S *window*

Look, see, her shadow crossed the glass but now.
Day never dawned upon the mountain's brow
More gladly welcome. Let us make her hear
The expected signal. Yet the fair may fear
Our numbers. Gentlemen, retire aside,
And watch the other. Thus shall we divide
The lovers. Yours the robber, mine the bride.

DON RICARDO.

A fair arrangement!

DON CARLOS.

If he comes, one thrust,—
Lunge out, and lay the hero in the dust.
While he lies bleeding, I shall seize the fair,
And carry off. Thus we dispose the pair.
And yet the man is brave, so thrust with skill,
Give him enough to quiet, not to kill.

[*The Lords disperse. When they are gone,* DON CARLOS *claps his hands three times. At the third time the window opens, and* DONNA SOL *appears at the balcony.*

DONNA SOL (*on the balcony*).

Hernani!

DON CARLOS.

I am lost if I reply.

DONNA SOL.

I come.

[*She shuts the window, and presently comes out of the door, with a lamp in her hand.* DON CARLOS *advances precipitately towards her;* DONNA SOL *drops her lamp.*

Oh, Heavens! another's step! I fly.

DON CARLOS (*detaining her*).

Lady—

DONNA SOL.

That voice too!

DON CARLOS.

Can that voice appear
Less amorous than the one you wish to hear?
That voice is but a lover's and a king's.

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DONNA SOL.

The king!

DON CARLOS.

Command him. At your feet he flings
His wealth, his crown, his power to smite and save:
The king commands, but Carlos is your slave.

DONNA SOL.

Hernani! help.

DON CARLOS.

How justly she complains!
The hand is not a bandit's who detains!

DONNA SOL.

The bandit is yourself. That royal brow,
Does it not blush, as mine for you does now?
Are these the exploits which exalt your name,—
At midnight to invade a lady's fame?
Yield to the bandit, king; if men were graced,
Not as their birth, but as their virtues placed
Their separate rank—if honour drew the line—
His were the sceptre, and the poniard thine.

DON CARLOS.

Madam—

DONNA SOL.

My father's lineage you forget;
He was a count.

DON CARLOS.

He was. And I can set
On that fair brow a ducal coronet.

DONNA SOL.

Hence, Carlos. There is naught between us two—
My aged father shed his blood for you,
And, jealous of that blood, his daughter's pride
The favourite scorns—aspires not to the bride.

DON CARLOS.

Come, bright attraction, then, my throne to share—
My queen, my empress.

DONNA SOL.

No. I see the snare.
Besides, to speak the truth, were you apart,
Another is the sovereign of my heart.

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Hernani reigns there; gladly I withdraw
With him far from the world and the world's law,
To share his destiny where'er he goes—
Privation, hunger, thirst, pursuit of foes;
Preferring, while I cling to him alone,
His love, his toils, his miseries, to a throne.

DON CARLOS.

I envy him.

DONNA SOL.

Him, whom your law through Spain
Pursues?

DON CARLOS.

He loves, and is beloved again.
I am alone. An angel shares his lot.
You hate me then!

DONNA SOL.

My lord, I love you not.

DON CARLOS (*seizing her with violence*).

What matters then?

DONNA SOL.

My lord, my lord, beware.
Reflect on what I am, and what you are.
Think that contending beauty swells the throng,
Which through your palace chambers files along;
Whate'er their rank, their title, or their name,
When the king woos, they find a mutual flame.
What has my love, my exile got from Heaven?
To you Castile and Arragon were given;
With Murcia, Leon, and ten kingdoms more;
Flanders' rich fields, the Indies' golden shore—
An empire so expansive, on its breast
The sun, descending, never sinks to rest.
Having all this, you fain would tear his bride,
His one possession, from Hernani's side!

[*Throws herself on her knees before him.*

DON CARLOS.

I'll hear no more. Forego to strive in vain,
My Indies are all yours. I'll give my Spain
To win that hand! [*Still keeping his hold of her.*

DONNA SOL. (*snatches the dagger from his belt*).

Of all you have to a

This poniard is the only gift I want.
Advance one step, I kill myself and you.
Help!

DON CARLOS.

Silence—

DONNA SOL.

Help! the deed is short to do.

DON CARLOS.

You trifle with my weakness. No delay;
I have three friends can force you to obey.

Enter HERNANI *suddenly.*

HERNANI (*appearing behind the King*).

One you forget; and one who will pursue
Your steps much closer than those three can do.

[*The King turns round, and discovers* HERNANI *motionless behind him.* DONNA SOL *rushes into his arms.*

DONNA SOL.

Hernani, save me from him!

HERNANI.

Never fear.

DON CARLOS.

Monterey!—Are my friends too far to hear?
How could they let this chief of gipsies by?
Sanchez! my friends!

HERNANI.

All at my mercy lie.
Expect no succour from their powerless swords;
With sixty bandits I can match your lords,
Each of the sixty worth the three and you.
The quarrel now remains between us two
With violent hand to force a lady's will
Was not a wise man's deed, King of Castile:—
It was a coward's!

DON CARLOS.

Can I stoop so low—
A bandit's taunts to answer?

HERNANI.

Well I know
My rank, but insult joined to injury brings

The subjects to a level with their kings.
Know ye the man before whose haughty brow
Your own must quail, whose grasp detains ye now?
My father earned a traitor's doom from thine—
I hate ye. You disgraced my name and line—
I hate ye. In my love you cross my path—
I hate ye. Hate ye with a rival's wrath;
And yet this evening hate had found repose;—
I sought but her, and would have fled my foes.
Don Carlos, 'tis in vain to rail or fret
I hold ye in the very snare you set;
Powerless to stir, surrounded, and at bay,
What will you do?

DON CARLOS.

You question me?—away!

HERNANI.

None of ignoble rank shall raise the sword
To snatch the task of vengeance from their lord;
No blade but mine that royal blood shall spill.
Defend yourself. [*Draws his sword.*

DON CARLOS.

I am your sovereign. Kill,
Strike, but no duel.

HERNANI.

If I think aright,
That blade was crossed with mine but yesternight.

DON CARLOS.

It was. Your name I knew not, and my own
You guessed not. But at present both are known.
I know the robber—you the king, to-day.

HERNANI.

Perhaps—

DON CARLOS.

No duel, murder me you may.

HERNANI.

With men like us, can names be sacred made?
Defend yourself!

DON CARLOS.

Assassin, to your trade!

[HERNANI *retreats*, DON CARLOS *eying him.*

You think then, bandits, that your cutthroat hands
Can spread unchecked their rapine o'er my lands;
And, stained with murder, be allowed to start
On a new course, the generous victors' part;
That we betrayed will deign, to save our lives,
With our good swords to cross your butcher knives?
Your crimes pursue ye, fly them how ye will.
Duels with you! Assassin! Strike, and kill!

[HERNANI *gloomily fingers the hilt of his sword for a moment; then turning suddenly towards the King, shivers the blade against the pavement.*

HERNANI.

Depart. We meet upon a future day,
On fairer terms.

DON CARLOS.

'Tis well, I must away
The judge, the fiscal, and the hangman too,
Ere night return, may have their work to do;
Then shall you feel my vengeance for the past.

HERNANI.

Vengeance is lame, but she arrives at last.

DON CARLOS.

Oh, that such waist a bandit's arm should clasp.

HERNANI.

Remember, thou art in the bandit's grasp.
The future Cesar of a subject land
Is small and weak, and trembling in this hand,
And I can crush, if close that hand be press'd,
Thy eagle's egg in its imperial nest.

DON CARLOS.

Do so.

HERNANI.

Away. And for your safety's sake,
From rovers of my band, this mantle take.

[*He throws his cloak over the King's shoulders.*

No vengeance shall anticipate my own.
Away. I keep thee for myself alone.

[*Exit* DON CARLOS.

DONNA SOL.

Now let us fly.

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HERNANI.

The task befits thee well,
To gather firmness as the tempests swell;
Around me still, companion, wife, and friend,
To cling in fond endurance to the end:
'Tis worthy of that firm and trusting heart.
But heaven above! for me to play that part!—
To drag her on, without regret or fear!
My time is past, the scaffold frowns too near.

DONNA SOL.

How say you?

HERNANI.

This great monarch, whom I braved,
Will seek his life by whom his own was saved.
He flies. Already at his palace gate
He calls around the minions of his state—
His guards, his lords, his hangmen.

DONNA SOL.

Thou wilt die!
Despatch! despatch! Together let us fly.

HERNANI.

Together? No! that hour is past for flight.
Dearest, when first thy beauty met my sight,
I offered, for the love which bade me live,
Wretch that I was, what misery had to give—
My wood, my stream, my mountain. Bolder grown,
By thy compassion to an outlaw shown,
The outlaw's meal beneath the forest shade,
The outlaw's couch far in the greenwood glade,
I offered. Though to both that couch be free,
I keep the scaffold's couch reserved for me.

DONNA SOL.

And yet you promised!

HERNANI (*falling on his knees*).

Angel, in this hour,
Pursued by vengeance and oppressed by power—
Even in this hour, when death prepares to close
In shame and pain a destiny of woes—
Yes, I, who from the world proscribed and cast,
Have nursed one dark remembrance of the past,

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E'en from my birth in sorrow's garment clad,
Have cause to smile—and reason to be glad.
For you have loved the outlaw, and have shed
Your whispered blessings on his forfeit head.

DONNA SOL.

Let me go with you.

HERNANI.

No. I will not rend
From its fair stem the flower as I descend,
Go. I have smelt its perfume. Go—resume
All that this grasp has brushed away of bloom.
Wed the old man,—believe that ne'er we met;
I seek my shade—be happy, and forget!

DONNA SOL.

No, I go with you. What can e'er atone
For your desertion?

HERNANI.

Let me fly alone.

DONNA SOL (*despairingly*; HERNANI *on the threshold*).

You fly me? Was it then for this I cast
All at your feet, to be repulsed at last?
Can he, for whom I braved my fate, deny
All that remains,—the bliss with him to die?

HERNANI.

Banished—proscribed—contagious.

DONNA SOL.

Rather say
Ungrateful—thankless!

HERNANI.

No, not that. I stay—
You wish it. Let me seek these arms again;
And till these arms release me, I remain.
Forget our fortune and our foes to-night;
Sit on this stone above me, bend thy sight
On mine, and flood me with its dazzling light.
Speak, and enchant me. Dearest, is't not sweet
To love, and see the loved one at thy feet;
Thus to be two, where not a third is nigh;
To the night-air, while others sleep, to sigh?

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Here, on thy breast, let my repose be found,
My love, my beauty!

[The sound of the distant tocsin is heard.

DONNA SOL (*rising*).

'Tis the tocsin's sound!
Hear'st thou the tocsin?

HERNANI.

'Tis our marriage-bell;
And these are notes of bridal joy, which swell
On the night breeze.

DONNA SOL.

Rise! fly! the town is bright,
Like sudden day.

HERNANI.

The marriage torches' light.
Come to these arms!

Enter a MOUNTAINEER, *sword in hand.*

MOUNTAINEER.

My lord! my lord! the foe
Musters his force; whole squadrons make a show
Already in the place.

HERNANI (*rising*).

What cause to fear?

Shouts without.

Death to the chief!

HERNANI.

Thy sword! the chief is here.
(*To* DONNA SOL.)
Adieu, then!

DONNA SOL.

By the open wicket fly.
Adieu! Remember, if you fall, I die,

HERNANI.

One kiss—

DONNA SOL.

Be quick, then, ere your time be past.

HERNANI (*kissing her forehead*).

Alas! it is my first.

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DONNA SOL.

Perhaps your last.

[*Exit* HERNANI. DONNA SOL *falls upon a bench.*

* * * * *

SCENE,

The Castle of Silva, in Arragon. A gallery of portraits of the Silva family; armour hung up between each portrait.

DONNA SOL, *dressed in white, standing by a table*
DON RUY GOMEZ DE SILVA *seated in an armchair.*

DON RUY.

To-day my niece that name with one supplies,
Which speaks of loftier rank and dearer ties.
But am I pardoned?

* * * * *

Oh! that this desire
Which fills the heart of frozen age with fire;
This love, which reinvigorates the mind,
Should leave the body cold and dull behind.
When, as I muse my garden glades along,
Some shepherd youth disturbs me with his song,
Whose sound from the green field can reach my bowers,
Thus I apostrophize my crumbling towers,
My dungeon keep, my loop-holed wall,
My woods, my harvests—I would give ye all;
Would give the fields my swarm of vassals tills—
Would give my flocks upon a thousand hills—
Would give the ancestors, who watch intent,
Chiding my slowness, for a son's descent
Among them, and expect him even now—
For that same peasant's hut and youthful brow.
For round that brow, uncovered by age's lines,
The dark locks cluster, and beneath it shines
An eye like thine; and thou mayst well behold,
And say that man is young, and this is old.
Thus to myself I speak, and speak it true:
All, to be young, and fair, and gay as you,

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All would I give. I dream! I young and gay,
Who to the tomb am doomed to lead the way!

DONNA SOL.

Who knows?

DON RUY.

Yet trust not that the youthful tribe
Can feel the constant love their words describe.
Let but a lady listen and believe,
They laugh to see her die, or live to grieve.
These birds of amorous note and gaudy wing
Can moult their passions like their plumes in spring;
The old, whose notes are tuneless, hues less bright,
Are steadier to their nests and in their flight.
Time on our furrowed brow the graver's part
May play—he writes no wrinkles on the heart.

* * * * *

With all a bridegroom's love, a father's pride,
I love thee, and a hundred ways beside:—
I love thee as we love the flowers—the skies—
Earth's breathing perfumes, heaven's enchanting dies;
And when they step, so graceful yet so free,
The aspect of that stainless brow, I see,
That heaven seems opening as I gaze on thee.

DONNA SOL.

Alas!

DON RUY.

And mark; the reasoning world approves,
When towards an honoured grave an old man moves,
If woman deign his useless age to tend,
And smooth his progress to his journey's end.—
It is an angel's task, and thou shalt be
That angel, in a woman's form, to me.

DONNA SOL.

You may survive, and I the example give
To die. Youth has no privilege to live.

DON RUY.

Truce to such dark discussions! I must chide
My child. This day is one of joy and pride;
E'en to the altar now, this hour invites,
And you not ready for the sacred rites.

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I count the tedious moments: quick, prepare
Your marriage toilet.

DONNA SOL.

There is time to spare.

Enter PAGE.

DON RUY.

Not so—(*to the* PAGE) What now?

PAGE.

A stranger at your door
Is waiting, your roof's shelter to implore:—
A pilgrim.

DON RUY.

Give him shelter, food, and rest;
Good fortune ever enters with a guest.
Brings he no news? What say they of the band
Of lawless robbers, who infest the land
With their rebellious crew?

PAGE.

Their end is near,
And vengeance has cut short their chief's career—
Hernani's.

DONNA SOL (*aside*).

Heavens!

* * * * *

Same Scene.—DON RUY *seated alone.*
Enter HERNANI, *disguised as a Pilgrim.*

HERNANI.

To all beneath this roof who rest,
Welfare and peace!

DON RUY.

The same attend my guest.
A pilgrim?

HERNANI.

Yes.

DON RUY.

Then I presume your way
Led by Armillas?

HERNANI.

Rumour of a fray
Deterred me.

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DON RUY.

With the routed robber's band?

HERNANI.

I know not.

DON RUY.

He who holds their chief command,—
Know'st thou his fate? Hernani's?

HERNANI.

Who is he?

DON RUY.

Thou know'st him not? For others, then, shall be
The thousand crowns his forfeit head shall bring
This long-unpunished rebel to his king.
And if towards Madrid your steps you bend,
You yet may see the hangman make his end.

HERNANI.

I do not go there.

DON RUY.

He is doomed to die.
He takes his head who chooses.

HERNANI (*aside*).

Let him try.

DON RUY.

Where leads thy path?

HERNANI.

My lord, it leads me now
To Sarragossa's town.

DON RUY.

Perhaps a vow.
And to what saint? Our Lady?

HERNANI.

To the last,—
Our Lady of the Pillar.

DON RUY.

He is past
All hope of good who falters, or who faints,
Ere he redeems his pledges to the saints.
Thy vow accomplished, hast thou no desire
But just to see the pillar, and retire?

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HERNANI.

Yes; I would see the altar torches shine
Around our Lady's image in her shrine;
The golden lamps which light, with fitful flame,
The solemn vault.

DON RUY.

'Tis well, my friend. Your name?
Ruy de Silva's mine. Oh! you may spare
The pains to hide what you would not declare;
None in De Silva's house shall claim the right
To drag a stranger's secret into light.
You ask a refuge?

HERNANI.

Yes.

DON RUY.

No thanks from you:
To him who trusts my honour, mine are due,
Rest, and be welcome; I would do the same
For Satan, if God sent him here by name.

Enter DONNA SOL, *in bridal array, with Pages, Valets, and Ladies: before her is borne, on a cushion, a casket of diamonds, which is then deposited on the table.* HERNANI, *thunderstruck, gazes on* DONNA SOL.

DON RUY.

Come, kneel to *my* Madonna; for to-day
She sheds good fortune round on all who pray.
No ring, my careless bride? No marriage crown?

HERNANI (*in a voice of thunder*).

A crown! Who wants a thousand crowns paid down?
[*He tears off his pilgrim's gown, and appears in his original costume.*
I am Hernani!

DONNA SOL.

Heavens! Alive?

HERNANI.

'Tis true!
I am the man your bloodhounds all pursue;
I own no common title, but am proud
To speak Hernani's dreaded name aloud—

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The convict! Take this forfeit head; 'twill pay
More than your marriage feast shall cost to-day.
Bind me!—But no, 'twere useless; for a chain
Is round me, which I cannot break.

DON RUY.

'Tis plain
My guest is mad.

HERNANI.

A price is on his head.

DONNA SOL.

Oh, heed him not.

HERNANI.

What I have said, is said.

DON RUY.

A thousand crowns! My friend, the sum is great;
My people may be tempted.

HERNANI.

Why debate?
Yield me.

DON RUY.

Be silent.

DONNA SOL (*aside to* HERNANI).

For my sake restrain
This madness.

HERNANI.

I must join the bridal train.
A bride, lord duke, waits me as well as you;
Not quite so fair as yours, but quite as true—
Death! Do none stir?

DONNA SOL.

Hernani! for my sake—

HERNANI.

A thousand crowns, my masters! Come and take.
A thousand crowns! Come, gain it while you can:
Remember, riches make the slave a man.
You shrink!

DON RUY.

Some cause for shrinking may be shown,
For he who touched your head would risk his own.

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Wert thou Hernani—wert thou, in his stead,
The incarnate fiend—if empires for thy head
Were offered, in the place of paltry gold—
If for such price as this thy life were sold,
Here thou wert safe, as in the court of heaven,
By which the charge to guard thee has been given;
And let me perish, if the hand of power
Shall harm one hair of yours. Within an hour,
My niece, we marry. To your room!—I go
To close my castle gates against a foe. [*Exit.*

DONNA SOL *goes towards the door, as if to follow her attendants; then, when the Duke has disappeared, returns anxiously to* HERNANI.

HERNANI.

Accept my compliments on your array;
Your toilet charms me more than I can say—
No foil, no tinsel here—all fair and brave.
[*Examining the casket.*
He dare not play you false, so near his grave.
Naught missing? Necklace—earrings—every thing—
The ducal coronet—the golden ring!
How like his love—so faithful, deep, and true—
This casket seems!

DONNA SOL (*taking a dagger from the casket*).

You have not searched it through.
Behold this dagger, which I chose alone
Of all the gifts—among the rest, a throne—
Which the king offered, which for you I spurned—
You, my accuser!

HERNANI (*at her feet*).

Reason has returned.
Oh, let me wipe these bitter tears away—
Tears, which my folly caused, my blood shall pay.

DONNA SOL.

Hernani! still I love you; and forgive,
Because I love.

HERNANI.

That pardon bids me live.

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But e'en thy love and thy forgiveness bring
No balm to sooth my self-reproaches' sting.
Oh, I could watch thee, were it but to trace
The spot thy footstep pressed, and kiss the place.

DONNA SOL.

To think the memory of my love so frail,
That force could bend, or misery make me quail,
And narrow this free bosom to a cell,
Where any image but thine own might dwell!

HERNANI.

Oh, I blasphemed and raved! Alas! were I
The object of a madman's blasphemy,
I should discard the wretch, whose passion takes
Its life and spirit from the wounds it makes.

DONNA SOL.

Oh, you have ceased to love?

HERNANI.

My soul, my heart,
Are thine. Then blame me not that I depart.
'Tis for thy sake alone I wish to fly.

DONNA SOL.

I shall not blame thee. I shall only die.

HERNANI.

Die! and for me!

DONNA SOL.

For whom, if not for you?

HERNANI.

Again you weep—and who shall make *me* rue,
Who cause those tears? You will forgive again,
And who my depth of anguish can explain,
To see the tear-drop dim that eye, whose blaze
Is all on which I love, and live to gaze?
Oh! had I worlds, these worlds were all for you.

DONNA SOL.

You are my master, generous, brave, and true.

HERNANI.

Could we but love too much, how could I bless
My fate to perish of that love's excess!

DONNA SOL.

Thine, and for ever! Heaven, attest my vow

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HERNANI.

Oh! that thy poniard could but strike me now!

DONNA SOL.

Heaven will be angry with these words of ill.

HERNANI.

Let it unite, if it refuse to kill.
Come to these arms, I yield me to its will.

Enter DON RUY GOMEZ.

DON RUY.

And this is hospitality's reward?
And this the guest whose life I went to guard?
Foolish old man! for this array thy power—
Up drawbridge, bolt the portal, man the tower!—
Select a harness fit for age to wear,
Such as the strength of sixty years can bear—
Prepare to fight, to die, to starve, to burn—
Brave all the worst—to meet with this return!
Yes, I have walked for sixty years of time,
No dull observer in a world of crime—
Have seen men live accursed, and die unblest—
Sin unrestrained, and perish unconfessed—
Sforza and Borgia both, the world's disgrace,
Have seen, and Luther, who now holds their place—
But never saw the criminal who dared
Insult the roof whose very rights he shared;
This is not of my time. We live to view
Crimes which no former ages ever knew;
Moors and Castilians, sprung this man from you?
[*Appealing to the portraits.*
Lords of De Silva, fathers of my race,
Listen, and hear me; if my rage embrace
Rash counsels,—if with vice's name I brand
The virtue of the open heart and hand,
Forgive me.

HERNANI.

If to man was ever given
To meet with noble brow the glance of heaven;
If ever heart betrayed the noble line
From which it sprung, that brow and heart are thine.

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I stand a culprit here, with naught to say
Or do but face my judgment as I may.
I shared the shelter of your roof—I tried
To spoil your treasure—to seduce your bride.
I have my blood to offer.—When 'tis shed,
Wipe but your blade, and think not of the dead.

DONNA SOL.

De Silva, hold. The crime was mine alone.

HERNANI.

Wait, lady, wait. This hour I claim my own.
I would employ the moments which remain—
My last—not to extenuate, but to explain:
Believe a dying culprit. Be secure,
De Silva; I am guilty, she is pure.

DONNA SOL.

Mine was the crime; I love him.—Yes, 'twas I—
I love him.

DON RUY (*furious*).

Woman, you shall see him die.

[*Trumpets without.*

Enter PAGE.

DON RUY.

What noise was that?

PAGE.

A herald, sir, demands
Admission for King Carlos and his bands
Within your gates.

DON RUY.

Obey the king's commands.

[*Exit* PAGE.

DONNA SOL.

He's lost!

[DON RUY *goes to one of the portraits* (*his own*), *and, pressing a secret spring, a concealed door is discovered in the wall*

DON RUY.

You enter here

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HERNANI.

I hold my life
At your disposal, and, to close our strife,
Strike when you will.

[*He enters the secret door.* DON RUY *presses the spring, and the portrait resumes its natural position.*

DONNA SOL.

Oh, spare that life to-day!

PAGE *entering.*

My lord the King.

Enter DON CARLOS, *followed by numerous armed men;* DONNA SOL *lowers her veil.*

DON CARLOS.

How comes it, cousin, pray,
That when your sovereign seeks De Silva's hall,
Your bolts are drawn, your archers on the wall,
To hear my herald waste his breath beneath?
I thought your sword was rusting in its sheath,
And find it ready from that sheath to start—
'Tis somewhat late to play this youthful part.—
Wear I the turban?—Answer, do I spring
From Moorish race?—am I a Christian king,
Carlos? or do I bear a Pagan name,
Mahom Boabdil, that I bear this shame?

DON RUY.

My lord—

DON CARLOS (*to his attendants*).

Seize all the castle gates, and take
The keys. Is this the fashion you would wake
The ghost of dead rebellions, and renew
Old treasons? Know, the King is waking too
Ready rebellion's progress to arrest,
And crush its leaders in their mountain nest.

DON RUY.

None of De Silva's line was ever found
A traitor.

DON CARLOS.

Speak me out, or to the ground

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Each stone of your eleven towers I raze.
There lives one spark of old rebellion's blaze—
The bandit chief survives! Who hides him now?
Who guards the rebel? Rebel duke, 'tis thou!

DON RUY.

It is.

DON CARLOS.

'Tis well. His head or thine must fall—
Or his or thine shall grace thy castle wall.
Hear'st thou, my cousin?

DON RUY.

You shall be content,
My lord, if that be all.

DON CARLOS.

Oh, you repent;
Produce the rebel.

DON RUY (*leads the King to the most ancient of the portraits*).

In that reverend face
Behold the father of De Silva's race,
Silvius; in Rome he filled the consul's place
Three times. (Your patience for such honoured names.)
This second was grand master of St. James
And Calatrava; his strong limbs sustained
Armour which ours would sink beneath. He gained
Thirty pitched fields, and took, as legends tell,
Three hundred standards from the infidel;
And from the Moorish king Motril, in war
Won Antiquera, Suez, and Nijar,
And then died poor.

* * * * *

This reverend brow,
This was my sire's—the greatest, though the last:
The Moors his friend had taken, and made fast—
Alvar Giron. What did my father then?
He went to seek him with six hundred men;—
He cut in stone an image of Alvar,
Cunningly carved, and dragged it to the war;
He vowed a vow, to yield no inch of ground
Until that image of itself turned round;

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He reached Alvar—he saved him—and his line
Was old De Silva's, and his name was mine—
Ruy Gomez.—

DON CARLOS.

Drag me from his lurking-place
The traitor!

DON RUY (*leads the King to the portrait behind which* HERNANI *is concealed*).

Sir, your highness does me grace;
This, the last portrait, bears my form and name,
And you would write this motto on its frame:—
"This last, sprung from the noblest and the best,
Betrayed his plighted faith, and sold his guest."

DON CARLOS (*retiring, somewhat disconcerted*).

I shall abate your house. Strongholds like these
I hate.

DON RUY.

Your highness can afford to please
Your fancy.

DON CARLOS.

I shall raze its towers, and sow
Their place with flax-seed.

DON RUY.

Better that should grow,
And mark and mock the desolated spot,
Than falsehood's stain should be De Silva's lot;
Is it not true sirs?—I appeal to you.
[*Appealing to the portraits*

DON CARLOS.

His head is mine; you promised—

DON RUY.

One of two—
Take this.

DON CARLOS.

You wear my long indulgence out!
Produce the wretch you shelter.

DON RUY.

Can you doubt
My word?

DON CARLOS (*to his men*)

Explore each tower, cave, and cell.

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DON RUY.

My lord, my dungeon keeps a secret well,
Like me; and it may pass your power to bring
To light our mysteries.

DON CARLOS.

I am your king.

DON RUY.

Until these towers are levelled to the plain,
Just as you threatened, and their master slain,
Your highness can learn nothing.

DON CARLOS.

All is vain;
Menace and prayer alike. Give me his head.
The bandit, or your castle.

DON RUY.

I have said.

DON CARLOS.

Two heads instead of one then. 'Tis my will.
Arrest the duke there!

DONNA SOL (*tearing off her veil, rushes between the King, the Duke, and Guards*).

Carlos of Castile!
You are a wicked king!

DON CARLOS.

This lady here!

DONNA SOL.

You bear no Spanish heart.

DON CARLOS.

You are severe
Upon your sovereign. 'Tis to you I owe
This rage—from you the faults you censure flow;
Where'er your power extends, you rule our fate—
You make a demon of the man you hate;
Hadst thou been kind, enchantress, I were great,
The tiger now, whose angry roar can thrill
Your ear, had been the lion of Castile.
Yet, I obey.—(*To the Duke*). My cousin, I respect
Your scruples, and permit you to protect
Your castle's inmate. Set yourself at rest—
Betray your sovereign, and defend your guest.

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I take one hostage only from your hall—
Your niece.

DON RUY.

One only?

DONNA SOL.

Me!

DON RUY.

And this is all!
The generous victor! Boon without compare!
The heart to torture and the head to spare!
Great Grace!

DON CARLOS.

The traitor, or the lady? Choose—
One I must have.

DON RUY.

But one you can. Then use
Your pleasure.

[*The King approaches* DONNA SOL; *she takes refuge with* DON RUY.

DONNA SOL.

Save me!—Wretched, it must be—
Me or my uncle. Let it fall on me.
I follow, sir.

DON CARLOS.

I triumph in the thought;
This fair one to her senses shall be brought.

[DONNA SOL *goes to the casket, and taking from it the dagger, hides it in her girdle.*

What hides she there?

DONNA SOL.

A jewel which I prize.

DON CARLOS.

Show it.

DONNA SOL.

Another time, sir.

[DONNA SOL *gives her hand to* DON CARLOS, *and prepares to follow him;* DON RUY, *having stood some moments overwhelmed in grief, turns round suddenly.*

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DON RUY.

Earth and skies!
Since honour nor compassion can prevail—
Ye trophied chambers, walls hung round with mail—
Ye banners, seamed with scars of conflict, fall,
And crush the oppressor in my father's hall!
Leave me my child, my last, my only good!

DON CARLOS.

My prisoner, then!

DON RUY.

Respect De Silva's blood.

[*Going towards the concealed door, he turns again to the portraits.*

Hide me from these! They stop me on my path!

[*Again he advances towards the secret door, then turning to the King.*

You will?

DON CARLOS.

Yes.

[*The Duke raises his trembling hand to the secret spring, then falls at the King's feet.*

DON RUY.

Let my life assuage your wrath.

DON CARLOS.

Your niece shall.

DON RUY (*rising*).

Take her; let my honour live
Stainless.

DON CARLOS.

Farewell.

DON RUY.

God keep you, and forgive!

[*Exit the King, with* DONNA SOL *and attendants. As soon as they are gone,* DON RUY *seizes two swords, measures them, and lays them on the table; then he goes to the portrait, presses the secret spring, and the door opens.*

Come forth!

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Enter HERNANI.

Don Carlos is beyond my walls,
Vengeance remains, and reparation calls.
Choose—and choose quickly! Can it be with fright
Your young hand shakes?

HERNANI.

Old man, we may not fight.

DON RUY.

Why! are you frightened? Is your rank and grade
Too humble? For a wrong received, my blade
Shall cross a slave's.

HERNANI.

Old man—

DON RUY.

You cannot fly,
Young man; prepare to kill me, or to die.

HERNANI.

Granted—to die! My life I owe to you;
Spite of myself, you saved it—take your due.

DON RUY.

Blame but yourself alone, then. Time runs fast—
Pronounce your prayer.

HERNANI.

To you I make my last.

DON RUY.

Make it to Heaven.

HERNANI.

To thee, to thee, old man.
Kill by what mode you please—strike how you can—
But do not, while the blow impends, deny
The last sole boon—to see her, ere I die.

DON RUY.

To see her!

HERNANI.

Let me hear her voice's tone;
At least, that voice but once, and once alone.
You shall be there; I will not speak, nor move.
Then strike me as I listen.

DON RUY.

Saints above!

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Is that retreat so deep, that he has heard
Nothing of what was spoken?

HERNANI.

Not a word.

DON RUY.

To save your life, I was compelled to bring
A hostage, in my niece, to—

HERNANI.

Whom?

DON RUY.

The king.

HERNANI.

The King. He loves her! and obtains by force
All she refused his prayer.

DON RUY.

My horse! my horse!
Gather my vassals for pursuit!

HERNANI.

Attend.
Slow vengeance is the surest to its end.
I am your property; but you may still
Employ the man you have a right to kill—
To grant my share of vengeance were but just.
For this one boon I bow me to the dust,
And kiss your feet. When he whom both pursue
Has died for us, then I will die for you.

DON RUY.

Will you submit, as now, your blood to shed?

HERNANI.

I swear it.

DON RUY.

By what oath?

HERNANI.

My father's head.

DON RUY.

Will you remember this some future day?

HERNANI.

Listen. Accept this horn. Betide what may,
Whene'er it please you to exert your power,
Whate'er the time or place, to name my hour—

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Come, and be welcome. Sound this horn, and then
'Tis done.

DON RUY.

Your hand. (*Addressing the portraits.*) Bear
witness, ancient men! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE,

The Tomb of CHARLEMAGNE, *in Aix-la-Chapelle.*

Night.

DON CARLOS *and* DON RICARDO, *a Courtier* (*wrapped in cloaks*).

DON RICARDO (*with a lantern in his hand*).

This is the place.

DON CARLOS.

'Tis here the traitor band
Meet, to be crushed at once beneath this hand.
My friend, the elector, lends the appropriate stage
For treason's foul designs and faction's rage;
Murder breathes freely in a catacomb,
And loves to whet her dagger on a tomb.
These gallants, still so ready with their knives,
Are playing somewhat high—they stake their lives.
Faith! they do well, in these sepulchral caves
To hatch their crimes;—the journey to their graves
Will be the shorter. Do these caves extend
Far under ground?

DON RICARDO.

My lord, before they end
They reach the fort.

DON CARLOS.

Too distant to explore.
Read me the list of traitors' names once more.
* * * Am I sure?
The college meets, but is their choice secure?
And when it fixes the imperial crown,
What signal speaks the election to the town?

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DON RICARDO.

The cannon's thunder—one for Saxony—
Two for the Frenchman—for your highness, three.

DON CARLOS.

This is the hour the traitors meet. A way!—
Give me the key.—Three cannon shots, you say?

[Don Ricardo *bows assent, and retires.*

DON CARLOS, *alone.*

Great Charlemagne's shade, the mighty and the just!
I sue for pardon to thy hallowed dust,
That human aims and passion's voice presume
To pierce the sacred silence of thy tomb.
Yet must I force it. (*He places the key in the door of the tomb.*) Heavens! if he should rise,
And glare upon me with his lifeless eyes!—
If this sepulchral cell disclose the dead
Erect, and walking with a measured tread!
If I should enter there—to reappear
The strong limb palsied, dark locks blanched with fear!
I brave it! (*Noise of footsteps.*) Whence that noise?
Who dare invade—
Who but myself, the rest of such a shade?

[*The noise approaches.*

I had forgot—my murderers seek their prey.

[*He enters the tomb, and closes the door after him.*

Enter several of the Conspirators, among which are the Duke of Gotha and Don Ruy de Silva, all muffled in long cloaks and slouched hats; each takes the hand of his neighbour.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

Who's there?

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

A friend.

THIRD CONSPIRATOR.

The saints direct our way.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

'Tis well: we all are gathered. But the night
Is round and o'er us—darkness waits the light.

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[*The Conspirators seat themselves in a semicircle on the tombs; they then light their torches.*]

DUKE OF GOTHA.

Carlos of Spain, my friends, seeks to assume
The imperial purple.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

Carlos seeks his tomb.

DUKE OF GOTHA (*throws down his torch and stamps upon it*).

Quenched be his light, as now I quench this fire;
And as this torch expires, let him expire!

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

How many daggers shall the sentence need?

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

One arm, one blade, one blow, to do the deed.

THIRD CONSPIRATOR.

Who strikes it?

ALL.

I!

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

All will! one only may.
Let us decide the choice by lot, and pray.

[*The Conspirators write their names on their tablets, and having rolled up the paper, throw it into an urn.*]

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

May the elect have faith in God on high;
Strike like a Gentile—like a Hebrew die!
Let him be fit to strike with fire and steel,
Sing at the stake, and laugh upon the wheel—
Resigned alike to perish and to kill.

[*Draws a name from the urn.*]

ALL.

What name?

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

Hernani!

HERNANI (*appearing from the crowd*).

Fortune aids my will!

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Aim of my soul, and object of my vow,
Pursued and won, Revenge! I hold thee now.

DON RUY (*aside to* HERNANI).

Grant me this office.

HERNANI.

No, upon my life,
Fortune and I have been too long at strife;
'Tis the first time I have her smiles to know.

DON RUY.

My lands, my fortune, for this single blow!

HERNANI.

I will not.

DUKE OF GOTHA.

Aged man! your arm might fail.

DON RUY.

Away! the soul and spirit may prevail
Where the flesh falters; judge not by the sheath,
Rusted and worn, the blade which lies beneath.
(*To* HERNANI.)
Remember thou art mine, whose wish you scorn;
Grant me but this, and I return this horn.

HERNANI.

My life, old man! and what have I to prize
In life? My father's blood for vengeance cries.
No; I prefer revenge! Wouldst thou restore
Her?

DON RUY.

Never: take this horn.

HERNANI.

No more, no more;
My chase is done. Lord Duke, leave me my prey.

DON RUY.

Cursed be the man who bears the prize away!

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

Brother! this very evening it were well—

HERNANI.

Fear not. I know to do the work of hell
Without a tutor, sir.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

Let treason fall
Upon the traitor. Counts and barons, all!
If this man perish ere he do the deed,
We swear, in turn, to die or to succeed?

ALL.

We swear!

DUKE OF GOTHAI.

On what?

DON RUY (*holds up the hilt of his sword*)

The cross I hold on high.

ALL.

Unshrived and unrepenting let him die!

[*The distant sound of cannon-shot is heard; all remain silent. The door of the tomb opens, and* DON CARLOS *appears upon the threshold, —a second shot is heard—and then a third.*

DON CARLOS.

Back, gentlemen! an emperor's tomb is near!
Your words have reached a living emperor's ear!

[*The Conspirators extinguish their torches.*

Silence and night? How soon my voice can drive
The swarm to the recesses of its hive?
Strike, if you dare! an emperor's blood shall flow.
Forward! an emperor's breast invites the blow.
But now your torches gleamed with bloody light;
My breath has quenched the murderous glare in night.
Yet let your failing eyes in fear confess,
That I can kindle more than I suppress.

[*He strikes the iron door with a key; on which signal the dark subterranean passages are immediately filled with soldiers, bearing torches and arms.*

Mount now, my falcons, mount, and strike your prey;
Light up the cave, and drag the tribe to day;
Surround, and seize for treason to the state.

HERNANI.

'Tis Charles the Fifth. I thought 'twas Charles the Great!

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Alone, he looked it; circled with that ring
Of guards, he stands an ordinary king.

[*The Conspirators are surrounded and disarmed*

Enter DONNA SOL.

DONNA SOL.

The Emperor, soldiers! And are we, too, me—
Hernani?

HERNANI.

Well.

DON RUY.

I am not noticed yet.

[DONNA SOL *approaches* HERNANI; *he retires.*

HERNANI.

Madam?

DONNA SOL (*showing the dagger*).

I have it still!

HERNANI.

My love, my pride!

DON CARLOS.

Be silent, all the rest, and stand aside.
Gotha the Saxon, Lara of Castile,
What came ye here to practise? good or ill?

HERNANI (*stepping forward*).

A simple errand. To achieve your fall;
To write Belshazzar's sentence on the wall;
To give to Cæsar what was Cæsar's due.

DON CARLOS.

You traitor, Silva.

DON RUY.

Which, sir, of us two
Is traitor?

HERNANI.

Will his proud ambition thrives;
He has his wish—the empire and our lives.
He wears the purple in good time. Its train
Will drink the blood drop in without a stain.

DON CARLOS.

Cousin De Silva, facts have been revealed
Which dim the ancient blazon on your shield,
Bethink thee, treason is a fearful thing.

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DON RUY.

Crime follows crime! From Rodericks, Julians spring.

DON CARLOS.

Seize all the nobles! I would strike the crest.

[*The nobles step out from the cave, and are immediately surrounded.*

DONNA SOL.

He's safe.

HERNANI (*coming forward*).

I claim my rank among the rest.
And since precedence to the scaffold leads,
The serf eludes the axe, the noble bleeds;
And since the outlaw's head is now too low
To meet the blade, I lift it to the blow.
Duke of Segovia and Cordova too;
The God who gives the crown, and gave it you,
Made me Count Albatera and De Gor,
Marquis Monroy, and many a title more,
Grand master of Avis; men call me John
The exile, the proscribed of Arragon.
Thy sire pronounced on mine the traitor's doom,
And wrapp'd the annals of our race in gloom;
You have the scaffold, and the poniard we;
Heaven made me duke, but exile set me free,
To roam the mountains with a bandit train;
Since I have sharpened there my blade in vain,
And bathed its temper in the mountain spring,
Thus I assume my rank. [*Puts on his hat*
Our heads, oh King!
E'en while about to fall, may claim their right,
Thus to be covered in their sovereign's sight.
Grandees of Spain! whate'er your name and race,
'Tis John of Arragon who claims his place;
And if your scaffolds have not room for all,
Enlarge them, let our heads have space to fall.

DON CARLOS.

I heard this story once, but had forgot.

HERNANI.

Kings may forget; but 'tis the sufferer's lot

To bear through life the dark offence in mind,
Which on the offenders leaves no trace behind.

DONNA SOL (*kneeling to* CARLOS).

Oh! pardon, gracious sire! Forgive, or strike
Both with one blow, and punish both alike—
My love, my lord, my husband—I but live
In him—die with him. Pity, and forgive.
Oh! turn not with a dark design those eyes
Towards me.

DON CARLOS.

Dutchess of Segovia, rise.
Countess of Albatera. (*To* HERNANI.) You must string
Your other titles.

HERNANI.

Who speaks thus? The King!

DON CARLOS.

No. 'Tis the Emperor.

DONNA SOL.

Heavens!

DON CARLOS (*to* HERNANI).

Behold your bride.

HERNANI.

Just God!

DON CARLOS (*to* DON RUY).

Our cousin looks dissatisfied,
But Arragon with Silva well may wed.

DON RUY.

It is not that.

HERNANI.

How all my hate has fled!
[*Throws away his dagger.*

DONNA SOL.

My lord!

HERNANI.

My bride! This heart, with love untold,
Burns to thy beauty!

DON CARLOS.

Mine henceforth be cold.

Suffer the spirit you have roused in vain
So long, to be itself once more, and reign.
Thy love the empire, and thy mistress Spain.
Don John, thy heart is worthy of the line
From which it springs! [*To* Don John.
And worthy too of thine.
[*Placing the Order of the Golden Fleece round* Hernani's *neck.*
Receive this gift, to rank and virtue due:
Knight of the Fleece, be faithful, brave, and true:
But round your neck a nobler chain you bear,
Which kings bestow not—which I cannot wear—
The two arms of a loved and loving bride.
Away. Be thine the bliss to kings denied.
For your associates here, I know them not;
Their crimes are pardoned, and their names forgot.
I give this lesson from an infant throne.

CONSPIRATORS (*kneeling to him*).

Long may he live!

DON RUY.

I stand condemned alone.

DON CARLOS.

And I!

DON RUY (*aside*).

But I, like him, have not forgiven.

HERNANI.

Who thus can change our hearts?

ALL.

Protect him, Heaven.
Honour to Charles the Fifth!

DON CARLOS (*turning to the tomb*).

To Charles the Great!
Leave me alone with him. (*All retire* Don Carlos *alone.*
Guide of my fate!
My great example! Wilt thou shed thy grace
On him who seeks but to pursue thy trace?
I stood alone against an empire, toss'd
On faction's wildest waves, and almost lost;
The Dane to punish, and the Pope to pay—
The Turk and Luther barred alike my way—

The Doge and Francis marked me for their prey,
A thousand pomards, half-concealed in night,
Device to snare, and menace to affright.
For counsel and for aid to thee I cried,
And not in vain—thy regal voice replied,
How I might brave the threat, avoid the snare,—
Thy word was mercy!—thy advice, to spare.

SCENE.

Saragossa. A terrace and garden in the palace, with a balustrade, and steps leading down into the garden. Sound of music in the distance. Here and there Masks walking about.

Night.

Enter DON SANCHEZ, DON MATHIAS, *and* DON RICARDO.

DON RICARDO.

Joy to the happy pair, who wed to-night!
Each casement in the town is thronged and bright.

DON SANCHEZ.

'Tis well; for never for a feast more gay
Did marriage torches imitate the day;
And never yet did summer's midnight air
Play in the tresses of a bride more fair.

DON MATHIAS.

How fares the ancient duke? Does he not bid
His last attendants nail his coffin-lid?

DON SANCHEZ.

Nay: jest not on that subject, nor deride
That stern old man—he doted on the bride.
His hairs, which sixty years had turned to gray,
Were blanched to snowy whiteness in a day.

DON RICARDO.

He has not since been seen, as is declared,
In Saragossa.

DON MATHIAS.

He may well be spared.

Pastrana, in his coffin and his shroud,
Would match but poorly with this gaudy crowd.

DON RICARDO.

Marked ye, but now, amid the fair array
Of dress, and dancing plumes, and colours gay,
A spectre, which by yonder balustrade
Looked darkly down, and marred the masquerade?

DON SANCHEZ.

I saw it well.

DON RICARDO.

What was it?

DON SANCHEZ.

I could trace
Francasio's shape.

DON RICARDO.

Not so. It hides its face
Still with its mask.

DON MATHIAS.

'Twas Soma's frowning brow!

DON SANCHEZ.

Not so; for Soma spoke to me but now.

DON RICARDO.

It comes again! What can the spectre be?

Enter a black Domino, who slowly crosses the stage. All turn, and look on him.

If e'er the grave can set its inmates free,
Such is their step.

DON MATHIAS (*addressing the Mask*).

Fair masker!—(*the Mask turns round.*) By my soul,
His eyes are kindled like a living coal!

DON SANCHEZ.

If 'tis the Devil, or the Devil's sire,
He meets his match. (*The Mask stops, and looks fixedly on him.*) His eyes are balls of fire!

[*The Mask slowly descends the staircase, followed by the eyes of the whole company.*

DON RICARDO.

In truth, the vision spreads a gloom around.

DON MATHIAS.

Faith, it might fright us in a churchyard's ground!

DON SANCHEZ.

It comes, obedient to some wizard's spell,
To see our revels, and return to hell.

DON MATHIAS.

Well, we shall know to-morrow.

DON SANCHEZ.

Look, I pray;
It moves!

DON RICARDO.

The gloomy phantom stalks away.

DON MATHIAS.

Where glides it?

DON SANCHEZ.

Through the portal, down the stair
'Tis strange!

DON MATHIAS.

No more.—Here come the bridal pair.

Enter HERNANI *and* DONNA SOL, *hand in hand, followed by Masks, Lords and Ladies, Pages, &c.*

DON SANCHEZ.

'Tis midnight; and 'tis fit that we pursue
The example of the ghost, and vanish too.

[*Exeunt all but* HERNANI *and* DONNA SOL.

DONNA SOL.

Dearest! at length they leave us. By yon moon,
It should be late.

HERNANI.

And can it come too soon—
The hour that frees us from the listening crowd,
To breathe our sighs, so long suppressed, aloud?

DONNA SOL.

The noise disturbed me. Must we not confess,
Rejoicing stars the scene of happiness?

HERNANI.

'Tis true; for happiness is kin to rest,
And writes its lessons slowly on the breast.

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When busy pleasure strews its path with flowers
Or breaks the silence of its quiet bowers,
It flies; and if it smile, its smile appears
Far less allied to laughter than to tears.

DONNA SOL.

Yet in your eyes its smile is sunny day.
[*He motions to her to follow him.*]
Remain awhile.

HERNANI.

I am your slave—delay—
Do as thou wilt—all that thou dost is well;
My soul is all obedience to thy spell.
It burns; yet bid the fierce volcano still
Its fires—they sink, subservient to thy will,
Its gulfs shall close, its lavas check their tide,
And spring's young verdure clothe the crater's side.

DONNA SOL.

Your kindness brings my woman's heart to shame,
Hernani of my heart!

HERNANI.

Forbear that name!
Oh, be that sound forbidden and forgot,
Which wakes the memory of an exile's lot!
I knew him once. Hernani!—'twas a dream!—
His eye glared fiercely, like a poniard's gleam!—
Son of the mountain and the night! a vow
Of blood and vengeance written on his brow—
Proscribed—I cannot recognise him now!
I mix in festivals—I join the ring
Of glittering nobles, nearest to the king—
I walk with nobles—am a noble's son—
Thy love, thy husband! John of Arragon!
Am blest!

DONNA SOL.

And I!

HERNANI.

Why should I bear in mind
The tattered garments that I leave behind?
In mourning to my palace I repair,
An angel of the Lord awaits me there.

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I bid the fallen column's shaft aspire—
On my ancestral hearth I light its fire—
I ope its casements to the wind, which sports
Mid the rank herbage of its grass-grown courts—
I weed that herbage from the crevised stone,
And seat my house's honour on its throne:
My king restores me to each ancient right—
My seat in council, and my crest in fight.
Come, then, in blushing beauty, come, my bride,
Lay the sad memory of the past aside—
That past is all unsaid, unseen, undone;
I start afresh, a glorious course to run.
I know not if 'tis madness fires my breast—
I love you—I possess you—and am blest!

DONNA SOL.

How well, upon the glossy velvet's shade,
This collar looks!

HERNANI.

The King was so arrayed.

DONNA SOL.

I marked him not. 'Tis not the velvet's fold,
'Tis you that give its lustre to the gold.
Oh, you are fit to be the order's chief!
One moment yet—I weep, but not with grief.
One little moment, to indulge the sight
With the rich beauty of the summer night.
The harp is silent, and the torch is dim—
Night and ourselves together. To the brim
The cup of my felicity is filled.
Each sound is mute—each harsh sensation still'd.
Dost not thou think, that e'en, while nature sleeps,
Some power its amorous vigils o'er us keeps?
No cloud in heaven: while all around repose,
Come taste with me the fragrance of the rose,
Which loads the night-air with its musky breath,
While all around is still as nature's death.
E'en as you spoke—and gentle words were those
Spoken by you—the silver moon uprose.
How that mysterious union of a ray
With your impassioned accents made its way

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Straight to my heart! I could have wished to die
In that pale moonlight, and while thou wert by.

HERNANI.

Thy words are music, and thy strain of love
Is borrowed from the choir of heaven above.

DONNA SOL.

Night is too silent—darkness too profound.
Oh! for a star to shine, a voice to sound—
To raise some sudden strain of music now,
Suited to night!

HERNANI.

Capricious girl! your vow
Was poured for silence, and to be released
From the thronged tumult of the marriage feast.

DONNA SOL.

Yes; but a bird, to carol in the field—
A nightingale, in moss and shade concealed—
A distant flute—for music's stream can roll
To sooth the heart, and harmonize the soul—
Oh, 'twould be bliss to listen!

[*Sound of a horn in the distance.*

I am heard!

HERNANI (*shuddering*).

Oh, misery!

DONNA SOL.

Sure some angel caught my word.
'Twas thy good angel!

HERNANI (*bitterly*).

Surely—Hark, again!

DONNA SOL.

That was your horn! How well I know the strain!

HERNANI.

My horn!

DONNA SOL.

Do you, then, share this serenade?

HERNANI.

Share it?—I do

DONNA SOL.

Thou music of the glade—

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How I prefer thee to the festal sound
To which the dancer's giddy train goes round.
Then 'tis your horn, whose voice, like yours, I know.
[*Horn sounds again.*

HERNANI.

The tiger roaring for his prey below.

DONNA SOL.

Juan, that sound with rapture bids me glow.

HERNANI.

Call me Hernani; I must reassume
That fatal name of vengeance and of gloom.

DONNA SOL.

How say you?

HERNANI.

That old man—

DONNA SOL.

Why glares your eye?

HERNANI.

How in the darkness he stands laughing by!
Dost thou not mark?

DONNA SOL.

What is't you bid me see?
What man?

HERNANI.

The stern old man.

DONNA SOL.

Upon my knee,
To learn this secret of your soul, I pray.

HERNANI.

My oath—

DONNA SOL.

Your oath?

HERNANI.

What can I do or say?
Let me spare *her*. 'Twas nothing, my beloved.

DONNA SOL.

And yet you spoke.

HERNANI.

My mind was strangely moved.
I am not well—'twill pass—Be not afraid.

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DONNA SOL.

Shall I not bid my servant to your aid?

[*Horn sounds again.*

HERNANI.

He summons, and will have me! Hark! again—
I ought to strike—Alas!

DONNA SOL.

You writhe with pain.

HERNANI.

An ancient wound—I thought my strength restored,
It opens.—(*Aside.*)—She *must* leave me. My adored
Listen. That casket which in days less blest
I bore about me—

DONNA SOL.

I divine the rest:—
What would you with the casket?

HERNANI.

It contains
A vial, which will serve to end my pains;
Go seek it.

DONNA SOL.

I am gone. [*Exit.*

HERNANI (*alone*).

And what remains
Of my young joys?—He comes to blast them all.
The fatal finger shines upon the wall.
How my fate mocks me with its bitter smile!
He comes not;—were I but deceived the while?

Enter the MASK.

MASK (*in a sepulchral tone.*)

"Whene'er it please you to exert your power—
"Whate'er the time and place, to name my hour—
"Come, and be welcome. Sound this horn, and then
"'Tis done." Remember that those ancient men
Heard and attest the vow. Thy father's head,
The pledge thou gavest—thy witness, the dead.
Is't done?

HERNANI.

'Tis he.

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MASK.

I seek thee in thy bower
Of bliss, to tell thee 'tis arrived—the hour.
I find thee unabsolved.

HERNANI.

What wouldst thou do?

MASK.

Dagger or poison, choose between the two—
I have them here. Together we will stray
On our long path.

HERNANI.

So be it.

MASK.

Let us pray.

HERNANI.

What matters?

MASK.

Which?

HERNANI.

The poison.

MASK (*presenting a vial*).

Reach and take.
Drink, and leave some for me.

HERNANI.

For pity's sake,
To-morrow! If thou play'st a human part—
If heaven with human blood has warmed thy heart—
If, in its mercy, it delay e'en now
To write the words "For ever" on thy brow—
If e'er on thee the bliss supreme was shed,
To love in youth, and her you loved to wed—
If ever woman trembled in thy arms—
If ever passion's voice, or beauty's charms
To sooth thine ear, or glad thine eye, were known—
Wait till to-morrow—then demand thy own!

MASK.

Wait till to-morrow! Yes, you reason well—
This hour, this instant, sounds thy funeral knell.
How shall I speed, who may not wait till morn?
When I am vanished, who shall sound this horn?

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Alone to seek my place of refuge?—No.
Young man, together to the tomb we go.

HERNANI.

Demon, I free me from the bonds of hell;
I will not follow.

MASK.

So I thought. 'Tis well—
No living witness to thy vow. The dead
Alone record that pledge—thy father's head.
'Tis little—nothing—reckless youth may slight
A vow so trivial, and a pledge so light.

HERNANI.

My father! how I tremble at that name.

MASK.

'Tis only treason, perjury, and shame.

HERNANI.

Pastrana!

MASK.

Since the elder sons of Spain
Can sport with oaths, and make their promise vain,
Farewell.

HERNANI.

Remain. Remorseless in thy wrath,
Thus at the gate of heaven to cross my path!

[*He takes the vial.*

Enter DONNA SOL (*without seeing the* MASK).

DONNA SOL.

I cannot find that casket.

HERNANI (*aside*).

Heaven above!
Now to return.

DONNA SOL.

My presence moves my love.
There's something in thy hand arrests my eye—
Shines in your grasp—what is it?—quick reply.

[*The Domino unmasks, and discovers* DON RUY.

'Tis poison! some strange secret unrevealed;—
I am deceived.

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HERNANI.

Oh! were it still concealed.
My life is his who saved it. 'Twas my vow;
And Silva comes to claim the forfeit now.

DONNA SOL.

To me, and not to Silva, you belong.
(*To* Don Ruy.)
Your compact binds not; passion makes me strong—
I will defend him 'gainst the powers of man.

DON RUY.

Against his oath, defend him if you can.

DONNA SOL.

What oath?

HERNANI.

I swore it.

DONNA SOL.

No, it cannot be.
'Twas crime—'twas treason—madness—you are free.

DON RUY.

Away!

[Donna Sol *seeks to detain* Hernani.

HERNANI.

My father heard, and will attest
The oath he claims. Then leave me to my rest.

DONNA SOL. (*to* Don Ruy).

Tear him from me! Oh, you had better wring
Their young from tigers couching for their spring.
You know me not. For long the part I tried,
Of maiden shame, and innocence, and pride,
And pity for your impotence and age
Restrained me. Dread me now, inspired with rage—
Seest thou this poniard? Dread, old man, the steel—
What the eye threatens, know, the heart shall feel.
Dread me!

[*She throws away the dagger*

Ah! no misfortune makes me wild.
Hear me, Don Ruy, thy niece, almost thy child.
Oh! spare her husband! Pity and forgive;
Grant me his life, and suffer both to live.
I am a woman, feeble, weak, and frail—
The spirit rises, but the flesh will fail.

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DON RUY.

Lady—

DONNA SOL.

Forgive us both. You once were kind—
You cannot take him, and leave me behind;
I perish when on him you deal the blow—
I love him so!

DON RUY.

Too much.

HERNANI.

Your eyes o'erflow.

DONNA SOL.

You shall not perish. Grant him but a day,
And I will love you too.

DON RUY.

Perhaps you may;
And after him!

[*Hernani approaches the vial to his lips, she throws herself on his arm.*

DONNA SOL.

Oh! hear me—yet delay.

DON RUY.

The grave is yawning, and his hour will strike—
I cannot wait.

DONNA SOL.

Have I deserved to die?

HERNANI.

Oh! she distracts my senses with that cry!

DONNA SOL.

Thou know'st I have a thousand things to say—
When I have said them, then—

DON RUY.

I cannot stay.

[*She seizes the vial.*

DONNA SOL.

I have it!

DON RUY.

Since two women here I find,
I must go hence, to seek for men in mind
As well as outward form. You speak us fair,

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When by the blood from which you spring you swear.
I go to tell your sire how well you keep
Your compacts.

HERNANI (*to* DONNA SOL).

Stay. Alas! Wouldst thou not weep
Tears of more burning anguish e'en than now,
To see dishonour written on my brow;
To see me through the world a traitor driven,
By its just scorn? By all our hopes of heaven,
Restore that dark elixir!

DONNA SOL (*drinks the poison*).

Now I can!

DON RUY.

'Twas, then, for her?

HERNANI.

Behold'st thou, aged man?

DONNA SOL.

Blame not my act—I have reserved thy share—

HERNANI.

Alas!

DONNA SOL.

Thou wouldst not have endured to spare
My portion. Thou, weak man, canst not divine
How love the daughters of De Silva's line.
I drink the first, and am at rest. Proceed,
Drink if thou wilt.

HERNANI.

What demon urged the deed?

DONNA SOL.

It was thy will.

HERNANI.

Such dreadful death to brave!

DONNA SOL.

How so?

HERNANI.

That filter leads thee to thy grave.

DONNA SOL.

Was not this head to sleep upon thy breast
To-night? What matters where it sinks to rest?

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HERNANI.

My father, thy revenge is just—that I
Forget. [*He approaches the vial again to his lips.*

DONNA SOL (*throws herself upon him*).

Forbear! forbear! 'Tis hard to die—
This poison lives, and round the heart it hangs,
Like a fell serpent with a thousand fangs.
Oh, drink it not. Alas! I could not tell
That earthly pain could match the fires of hell—
He drinks!

HERNANI (*drinks, and throws away the vial*).

'Tis done.

DONNA SOL.

Come, then, to meet thy fate—
Come to these arms. Is not the torture great?

HERNANI.

Not so.

DONNA SOL.

Behold, our marriage couch is spread.
Am I not pale, for one so lately wed?
Be calm. I suffer less. Our wings expand
T'wards the blest regions of a happier land—
Together let us seek that world so fair—
One kiss—and one alone.

DON RUY.

Despair! Despair!

HERNANI.

Blest be the heaven, which from my birth pursued
My life with misery, and in blood imbrued—
For it permits me, ere I part, to press
My lips to thine, and die on thy caress.

DON RUY.

They still are happy!

HERNANI.

Donna Sol, 'tis night.
Dost thou still suffer?

DONNA SOL.

No.

HERNANI.

Seest thou the light?

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DONNA SOL.

Not yet—

HERNANI.

I see it. [*Dies.*

DON RUY.

Dead!

DONNA SOL.

Not so, we rest.
He sleeps. He's mine—we love, and we are blest.
This is our marriage couch. What happier spot
Can the world show? Lord Duke, disturb us not.
[*Her voice gradually sinks.*
Turn thee towards me—nearer yet—'tis well.
Thus, let us rest. [*Dies.*

DON RUY.

Both dead!—Receive me, hell!
[*Kills himself.*

END OF VOL. I.

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THE CLUB-BOOK.

GOWDEN GIBBIE.

BY ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

CHAPTER I.

"Though here they scrape, an' squeeze, an' growl,
Their worthless nievefu' of a soul
May in some future carcass howl,
The forests fright,
Or in some day-detesting owl
May shun the light."—BURNS.

In a border county, which for the present must be nameless, where the cultivated ground joins the natural pasture-land, there lived a man some five-and-forty years ago, whose sole pleasure was to see his flocks increase, his crops flourish, markets rise, and money come in. This man was an only son, and had survived his parents. When a babe in his mother's bosom, the minister of the parish spilt water on his face, quoted scripture, and, with a grave look, said "Gilbert;" but the peasantry of the district possessed a power in baptism even beyond that of the church, and, scarcely waiting till the child became a man, young and old hailed him by the name of "Gowden Gibbie."

The church is uninspired in matters of human concernment and character, and throws away the fine names of the land upon the inglorious and the unworthy. We have Cæsars without courage, Alarics without ferocity, and Michael Angelos without genius. The peasantry bestow names with a more discerning spirit; in the

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name they express the man and hit his character with equal skill and sagacity; and so it fared with Gilbert. The toname stamped his image in body and soul; and as his whole hope of fame is through it alone, I shall allow it to remain, without meaning any irreverence towards the church by adopting a name which it did not bestow.

Now Gowden Gibbie was a very remarkable person; and when the world is wise enough to love the social biography of men who neither fight battles nor write books, but whose character and ample means influence the countryside where they live, then will the name of Gibbie be heard of in the land, and quoted upon 'Change; and the sculptor's chisel and the painter's brush will be employed on his looks. He was in truth a singular man; woman he regarded as an expensive idol, on whose altar man offered up his soul, and, what was worse, his substance. He conceived that she was made purposely to invade man's repose, pillage his purse, and, by her changeable mood and changeable variety, convert this green and pleasant earth into a sort of supplemental purgatory. Woman came not within his scheme of household prudence, and he therefore dismissed her from his whole system of in-door and out-door economy, and intrusted the entire management of his estate to the wisdom and frugality of man. Yet he was not one of those sordid sinners who love to sit and flourish, like a potato, on a heap of dung. He was a man active, and stirring, and cleanly, who loved a bright fire and a well-swept hearth, a soft bed, and something comfortable for supper; who wore a well-brushed coat, and shining silver buckles in his shoes, and could crack a pleasant joke and chant a cheerful song as well as any woman-worshipper in the whole district.

How Gowden Gibbie continued to keep his establishment pure, and shining, and well arranged, without the help of woman's hand, is a secret which I am loath to reveal. I have no wish to teach other parsimonious creatures, with which the land is swarming, an art which

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they would gladly know; e'en let them hew a system out of the rough, like our border luminary. A broom, it is true, could be had for the cutting, and pure water ran past the door free of all expense; but these useful and meritorious servants never work of their own accord, —and yet they must have been frequently employed, for his house was as smooth, and orderly, and clean as if it had been under the care of a woman on trial for a wife, or a whole committee of experienced and fastidious spinsters. Of his well-ordered house he indeed made no boast, yet it was surmised that he felt some little pride in his domestic skill; for once on a time he exhibited the interior of his abode to two staid ladies, and said, as he handed them out of the house, "Now you have seen how weel a body can do without the help of that captious creature, woman!"

As he grew old, the love of gain grew with Gowden Gibbie also, and became a passion which, like the serpent-rod of the prophet, devoured all other feelings. Money was his mistress, nay, his goddess, and he bowed himself day and night at the feet of this golden Delilah. The sound of silver was in his ears far sweeter than music; and when he saw gold his eyes sparkled, and he discoursed of its value and of its uses like one inspired. On all other topics, save that of gain, he talked calmly and coldly, but on it he was rapt, eloquent, and imaginative. When a boy at school, he loved to read of troy-weight, by which silver and gold were weighed, and, moreover, he thought it unfair to multiply two figures together without producing something, and boldly seceded from Dilworth and Cocker, and said, "Twice naught's one!" He carried the same poetic principle of increase into all his speculations.

Yet it must not be imagined that he shut his eyes to the light of knowledge, or was unacquainted with those stores of pleasure and information which the geniuses of his country had accumulated. He was a lover of poetry, and I have heard him repeat, nay, chant, with visible emotion, the description of Susan Pye.

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"On every finger she wears a ring,
On her middle finger she has three,
With as much gold above her eye
As would buy a baron's land to me."

He would, he said, that the country swarmed with such meritorious damsels; but where, he inquired, would be found such windfalls except in song?

In scripture knowledge Gibbie was likewise great, and had by heart the whole chapter concerning the molten calf. He could lecture, too, on the surpassing splendour of Solomon's temple,—on the floors of silver, and ceilings of pure gold; and hold forth, like any young Episcopalian divine on whose sight the glory of a cathedral was dawning, concerning the wings of the cherubim and the untold talents of beaten gold which the fabric took. But the account of the golden statue which the King of Babylon placed on the plain of Dura, and called on all people to fall down and worship, he considered the choicest passage in scripture. He was of opinion that Solomon's wealth was a sure proof of his wisdom; but then, what were all the riches of the men of Israel compared to those of the Babylonian? The colossal size and vast weight of the Syrian idol filled his imagination, and he exhausted his arithmetical knowledge, including the supplemental discovery of "twice naught's one," in an attempt to calculate the actual number of spade guineas which it would have produced.

To the information which poetry and scripture thus opened to him, he added knowledge from darker and less certain sources. With all the traditions of his native land which wore a golden hue Gowden Gibbie was acquainted. Of every tower razed, or castle suddenly demolished, he had note, and could guess in what choked-up well or undiscovered dungeon the old governors had hid their wealth. He had some suspicions, too, that the legend did not much err which gave to those treasures a dragon or a devil for a keeper, and he frequently lamented the obduracy of the fiend which kept the money from circulating and making an honest interest. Of the wealth, too, which the earth concealed in her bosom he had most magnificent ideas, and declared

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that the Mammon of Milton was well acquainted with the natural treasures of creation when he reared the palace of Lucifer. Every rivulet with yellow sand had its source, he believed, in a vein of gold, and every hill was, in his fancy, one of nature's strongboxes filled with unsummable treasure. Of ladies with golden locks, of streams with golden sands, and of suns with golden beams, he loved to sing. At the age of forty, the throne of all other passions and feelings was vacated in his bosom to make way for the demon of lucre, who, large as the image on the plains of Dura, sat triumphing over him, heart and soul.

CHAPTER II.

Now, it came to pass, one fine summer's day, nigh sunset, that Gowden Gibbie was walking among his glens and hills, looking at his flocks, and calculating the highest possible produce of carcass and fleece. He loved to wander there, for in the days of the commons' king, James the Fifth, mines had been sunk, and the wimble of the explorer had gone deep into the hills. Tradition supplied what history had forgotten, and spoke of the cart and the cartloads of golden ore which the royal speculator extracted and converted into broad bonnet-pieces. Civil wars had come in the days of his daughter—the miners were dispersed or slain—the folly or the policy of the victors closed up the veins of wealth which wisdom had opened, and time had effaced and the plough had obliterated all traces of the miner's pick and spade. One little spring well, at which the miners drank and washed their ore, was still pointed out by the peasantry, and there Gowden Gibbie loved to sit and to drink also. He was now on his way to the well, and thinking as he went on the gold which

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the hill had yielded and the fountain had washed,—he looked up and saw that a stranger was before him.

A man sat by the miners' well, stricken somewhat in years, with an abundance of white hair, partly covered by a species of turban or bonnet; his shoes were dusty with travelling—he carried a strong pikestaff in one hand, and with the other sipped water from the little spring. Gowden Gibbie noted this sipping of water from the palm of the hand among his maxims of practical thrift, and advanced slowly towards the stranger.

The wanderer spoke first. "There is a treasure here, friend—e'en one of the best treasures of Providence. This little well is unto me as the melted silver, and this hill, on which the setting sun is shining, glows like unto the fine and the fused gold."

Gibbie gloried in words such as these—he looked wistfully on the stranger, and thought him either the spirit of one of the old miners returned to take another glance at the seams of gold, or a man endowed with that profitable sort of knowledge which points, like the diviner's hazel-rod, to concealed treasures. He looked on the well, and thought it had a very silvery-like sparkle—he looked on the hill, where the sun still lingered, and thought that it looked yellower than he had ever seen it; and he looked on the old man, and thought that in his eye there was a consciousness that gold was in the land.

"Gold, did ye say?" quoth Gowden Gibbie; "ay, I'll warrant there's that, and of the purest—and no sae deep down neither—though I cannot say that I ever found any, and deeply have I dug. Mines were here of old, and metal, precious metal, was found of a surety. A grand queen of some far-off land had a chain made on't—a load, I'm told, more fit for a horse than a hussy—it was a present, and that was warst, from ane of our auld-warld kings, and therefore a clear loss to the country:—but touching the hill?"

"Ay! touching the hill," said the stranger, fixing his keen eyes on Gowden Gibbie; "there are stories can

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be told of it would make the deaf hear. But ye were about to speak of it—say on."

"Indeed, friend," quoth Gilbert, "I have naught to say concerning it; the hill is no worse than other hills, —green in summer and brown in winter. How many score of sheep think ye now it will feed?"

The stranger sprung to his feet. "Gowden Gibbie," he cried, "thou art a sordid person, and knowest not the blessing which this hill contains. See! the golden sunbeam loves to linger on its summit—trow ye that it is not attracted there by the precious metal? The sun is a wise planet—he loves to shine where there are rare stones of vast prize, and where there are veins of liquid gold circulating through the earth, even as life's blood circulates in the human body."

"I have ye now! I have ye now!" shouted Gibbie; "O! precious man! O worthy stranger! Every word ye speak is as dropped honey. Liquid gold? I like the words, and weel can I support them. Listen to me this way. The very teeth of my sheep, which graze on this hill, are gilt as with gold, while the teeth of all those which graze on the other hills are as white as ivory. I'll warrant there's liquid gold in the hill. A sermon on the sinfulness of riches will not drive it out of my head."

The stranger looked on Gibbie for a minute's space or so, during which he seemed to take careful measure of his contracted soul. "All this is no news to me," he said. "When I dwelt on the banks of the Tigris, some seventy years ago, this hill of thine was well known. We called it the Golden Hill. Meikle have I heard the Cham of Tartary speak concerning it, as well as his second cousin the Sultan Cream-Cann-Categorie-Coolie Khan. The crown which he wore was made from its gold."

"No but the like of that now!" exclaimed Gibbie; "who could have dreamed of that? The Khan of Tartary to ken of my hill? and his cousin,—said ye his cousin?—to have his crown made out of our native gowd! And seventy years since ye dwelt on the

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Tigris! Wow, man, but ye look fresh and hale! The land must be favourable to poor human nature—not like this termagant country which freezes and drowns us, and then whips us away in the pride of life, and sends us to the dowie churchyard, and no a penny in our pocket."

"Peace, peace," said the stranger, holding up his head. "Ye multiply vain words, and sport with precious time; mark what I say. This hill furnished gold to the wise men of other days, and would do so again, were wise men to make the trial. All that it produces savours of the precious metal which it contains. The grass which covers it has a yellow hue, and the teeth of the sheep which it feeds are plated with pure gold. But its ore is not like that of other mines. The gold which circulates in its veins is melted, and may not be extracted by ordinary means. Dig the pit—sink the shaft—form the gallery—bring out the glittering treasure to the air, and try to wash and purify it, and, lo! it will slide away like water through the miner's sieve, and mingle again with the moist elements—it is liquid gold—how often shall I repeat it? Yet wisdom can do much, and patience can do more; and the charms which the Sultan Cream-Cann-Categorie-Coolie Khan taught me can do more than both. But I am wasting my time on a man dull and obtuse, whose sordid soul knows no better way of gathering gain than by the fleece of the sheep and the pound of tarry wool. I must be gone, far have I come, —farther have I to go—I am old, wearied, thirsty, hungry, all the portable gold which this hill contains is not in my sight as precious as a mouthful of supper and a cup of pleasant drink."

Gowden Gibbie had listened to sermons, but never to a sermon such as this. His sense of immediate loss was swallowed up by the hope of immense future profit; he conceived that the stranger was master of the secret of persuading the hill to give up its gold, and that he had the resistless charm taught by the incomparable Sultan Cream-Cann-Categorie-Coolie

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Khan, a long name, which he loved to pronounce—there seemed a spell in the sound. With the hope of obtaining the magic key which would unlock the whole treasure of mammon, he took the stranger by the hand as firmly as a well-filled purse, and said, "Such a story as yours! nay, but we may not part! come home with me,—ye shall have a mouthful of supper and something to drink; we can talk atween hands of the treasures of this hill, and of the wisdom required to obtain it"

The stranger uttered not a word, but followed his new acquaintance.

"Aweel now," said Gibbie, as he led the way to his house, "this art of yours is truly wonderful. And ye learned it on the Tigris, did ye, seventy years since? Ye cannot well be less than eighty years old—ye are a wonderful body—ye take a long step, and set down your foot like a pavior's rammer."

"Eighty years old," replied the wise man from the Tigris; "when I saw eighty years, these snow-locks were black as the wing of the raven. Many a sad day have I seen, and many a king's reign on the earth since then. And so this is your house—beneath its lintel I may not enter till I have said six several prayers. Three for protection from the snares of man, and three for protection from the wiles of women. I have suffered sadly in my time from both."

"Say the three first if ye like," said Gibbie, with a chuckling smile,—"the three latter are needless. Woman's foot has not crossed my threshold these fifteen years, and never shall, till I am stiff and stretched. She is a capricious and an expensive creature—has arts and ways a weak man like me canna well withstand."

"You are a fortunate person," said this wise man of the east, "and I am fortunate in having found you."

"Now," said Gibbie to his guest, as soon as he was seated, "ye maun ken that it is but to the wise and the prudent I lift my doorlatch, and spread on my table the fulness of my house. Cursed be he who shuts his

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heart and closes his door on knowledge such as yours. Sup of that dish—it is porridge made of the best of corn and pure water;—a primitive and a wholesome dish. Drink also of that milk, from which with a careful hand the cream has been removed; it is a patriarchal beverage, and has the sanction of Scripture. I never pour stimulating liquors into the veins of my guests, nor give them spiced and drugged food to shut up the sweet sympathies of human nature."

"You are wise and you are prudent," said the stranger. He tried a spoonful of porridge and seemed to swallow thistles—then threw the spoon down, and instantly said, "Is the moon risen?—look and see."

Gowden Gibbie was glad to see his guest forbear his supper; he thought this inquiry concerning the moon looked like a commencement on the matter of the gold; he hastened to the door and cried, "O! a moon, a glorious moon, as bright as gold and as round as a guinea—she is scarce a hand's breadth aboon the hill; as ye have done with supper ye may come and see her; she gleams on the summit of the hill like a new gilt weathercock."

"The very thing I want," said the stranger; "come in, take your seat: now look at me."

With a quiet and a curious look did Gibbie of the Golden-hill regard the stranger, who thus addressed him: "I have work to do in a far land before yon moon sinks into the sea, and my words must necessarily be few and my stay short. I would fain requite your hospitality by teaching you what I have never before taught man—the hidden mystery of obtaining liquid gold. Have ye any bee-hives?"

Gibbie stared—but answered, "Half a dozen, and thriving ones,—wherefore d'ye ask?"

"Because," said the other, "they gather gold from the flowers of the hill,—Did you never taste of the honey yourself?"

"Never but once," answered Gibbie, "and that was when I had a sore cough. Swallowing honey is like

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drinking silver—it is half a crown the chappin, market price—de'il a penny less."

"It is not only swallowing silver," replied the stranger, "but it is swallowing gold—that I could easily prove; however, let it pass, and now attend. I can teach you the way to draw gold from the hill as readily as blood can be drawn by leech or lancet from a man's body: an art which I learned, it matters not how."

"Not one brass bodle," said Gowden Gibbie; "it is a good art which teaches valuable knowledge, and must come from a pure source: I have made up my mind anent that."

"That shortens our work," said the other. "Well, I learned the art from the Sultan Cream-Cam-Categorie-Coolie Khan, who is a heathen prince, and as I thought you were a religious man, ye might be scrupulous concerning the sources."

"Me religious!" exclaimed Gibbie, "and scrupulous too! na—na—religion shall never mar the making of pure gold, though the fiend himself hold the crucible to melt it—na! na! I am soft of heart, it may be—and am sometimes led by the tenderness of my nature into expensive acts of hospitality—and even at a fair, or some such occasion, I have squandered a whole gray groat without remorse—yet I was never weak on the devout side. It's a sad matter to give away, as they do besouth the stream there, the tenth of a man's wealth to a spurred and booted divine, when a short prayer, and a bawbee prudently given, might do the needful for the future state. I'm saying—the tithe of this golden hill of ours will be a bonnie penny!"

"The tithe will be immense," replied the other; "but my secret, to be effectual, must be secretly wrought;—the church cannot—nay, must not know what we are about, else the whole spell will be as moonshine."

"I see! I see!" cried Gowden Gibbie,—"I have ye now—I have ye now—it's a deep one!—it will do—it will do—not that I am averse to let the church have

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her regular dues, ye see; but when one really can keep gold from her clutch, it's rendering her a Christian service—for she is so rich, and so puffed up, that I am not so sure but they are her kindest friends who keep her cup from running over."

"Peace, peace!" exclaimed the stranger, "truce to these vain words; this is work that may not be done lightly. Whatever I say must be done willingly: one murmur, and the spell is dissolved and your fortune crossed. Have fortitude, and ye shall be richer than Solomon; murmur or complain, and be as ye are now. These are the conditions, and they are not hard ones."

"Proceed," cried Gowden Gibbie, "I think I can stand it. Richer than Solomon! what a bribe! But bide ye, friend; will ye need any gold in the experiment? It's a scarce article, and hard to get; and now I think on't, there's a law against melting down his majesty's image."

"Thy gold is as dross, and thou art as a grain of dust!" exclaimed this strange magician, looking at his entertainer sternly; "do as I bid you, and beware murmuring; and mark me, should you desire to speak to me, say Ulack,—I am known by that name at the court of Prince Cream-Cann-Categorie-Coolie Khan, in the land of Bassarabia."

"O, Ulack, wondrous Ulack," said Gibbie, "bear with me, I pray you; remember that my patience has never been sobered down by woman, and that I have hitherto enjoyed my own free-will."

"I forgive you," said Ulack, "though it might have been better for the accomplishment of our undertaking, hadst thou been disciplined by the matrimonial curb: now's the time; put more fuel on the fire,—more, more; ay, that will do, though more may be necessary before we have done."

"It is the heat of summer," muttered Gibbie to himself, "and a large fire is really sinful, but the Goldenhill shall pay for this wastery."

"Confound your dirty turf," cried Ulack, as Gibbie began to place peats on the hearth, "dost grudge the

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dried wood and the kindliest coal to make sacrifice to the powers of the mine?"

"Lord, what a waster," murmured the other; "but when pure gold will come running upon me like a river, I shouldna grudge some wee expense, yet making a fire of dried wood is like burning bank notes." Ulack held up his hand, and Gibbie's lips ceased moving.

The fire, composed solely of fine dry wood, soon brightened up. Ulack took out a small bottle, dropped seven drops of liquid upon the flame, and said, "Cut seven collops, and no more, from the middle of that ham which hangs so brown in the chimney; knowledge such as mine cannot be transferred without fitting sacrifice."

Gibbie took a sharp knife, cut deep, and spared not; mentally cursing the expensiveness of the secret, and resolving to eat the chief share himself.

"Carefully and properly done," continued Ulack; "now, dress them on the embers, and place them on the table with bread and salt."

Gibbie laid the collops on the glowing embers of his precious wood-fire, cooked them to a turn, and set them smoking and savoury on the table along with bread and salt.

"Fill that vessel with pure ale," said the magician, "the true offspring of barley and hops."

"He will drink me out and eat me out of house and inheritance," groaned Gowden Gibbie; "but the hill shall make amends, I shall draw the gowd from it as I draw ale with this spigot and faucet; yet, after a', what's a bite and sup compared to a secret such as his."

He drew the ale, and placing it on the table, went on. "There! better never foamed in silver or horn: I brewed it with my own hands, and full seven years has it stood untouched; see what a head it carries; I never had the heart to tap it before. But be ye man or magician, beware how ye drink it, it's as strong as gunpowder. D'ye no think now, but surely ye ken best, that water would have done as weel? No that

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I grudge ale, only water is sae handy, and there it runs past my door pure as melted silver."

"Peace! peace!" said Ulack, setting at the same time the flagon to his mouth. With slow and protracted satisfaction he drained it dry, wiped the foam from his lips, gathered breath, and said, "Water for lead, ale for copper, whiskey for silver, but brandy for pure gold. Such is my creed, and such is the true spirit of my spell. Water! I love water; give me water; I love it for its purity, and drink it for its own sake; stronger liquor I drink for the sake of others: so give me water."

"I'm thinking now," said Gibbie, pondering hurriedly over the scale of gain which Ulack described, "I'm thinking now that something warmer and more comforting would suit better with your season of life. Water is chilly; ale confuses the brain and begets dulness; wine is good, but it is wholly out of the question, it never crossed my lips; whiskey burns like devouring fire, and moreover only produces silver; but brandy! I have some brandy,—that is a blessing: will the spell suffer from its being smuggled?"

"Ay, surely," answered Ulack, "that is a diminution of its virtue; but we must e'en use the more on't—that, however, I am willing to do; so produce the smuggler's gardavine, which stands in the nook of your chamber beside the oaken chest, where your bills and bonds are kept; be handy and let us have it—time flies."

Away went Gibbie to his secret chamber, and groping out the gardavine, muttered as he returned, "This man Ulack knows all things. I wonder now if he could construct a magic trap to catch coined gold and rights of estates as easily as he can gather in this subterranean harvest of the natural riches of the earth. That would be a secret worth knowing; I could afford to treat him well in such an undertaking; it would raise the value of money in he land—the rate of interest would rise."

"Come, come, thou parsimonious reptile!" shouted Ulack, "thou wilt lose present gain imagining future profit. Come, come, the art is an innocent art; it only

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steals riches from the lap of opulent nature, according to scriptural permission; and were I to try to turn the strength of my art to such evil purposes as suit thy sordid views, few would be my days, and sudden would be my doom."

"Ulack!" cried Gibbie, "man who knows all things! forgive me, for I but thought it; and unwise thoughts will rise with the wisest."

"Fill that cup with brandy; see that ye spill not one drop, and yet the cup must be full."

Gowden Gibbie poured in the liquor with a look of such undissembled sorrow that the drops seemed to be coming from his heart. "It is enough," said Ulack; "now place it on the board beside these smoking collops, and ask a blessing; for all must be done reverently." Gowden Gibbie asked a blessing, a thing not common with him; and as the last words died on his lips, he stretched out his eager hands to the bread and meat.

"All on that board," said Ulack, "yea, and much more is necessary for the furtherance of your fortune; it is required to complete the spell. Eat up and drink up thy wealth, if thou wilt; your table is an exact symbol of success in this matter. It is heaped, and the cup is running over; in like manner will gold come with an overflow. But for every mouthful of that food which ye eat, and every drop of that liquor which ye drink, so will ye lose in proportion of the blessing which will come upon you. Half of that cup of brandy, and half these collops (and savoury they are), would cost you half the gold of the hill. This is a matter of undisputed calculation, and I remember what befell the wise Prince Cream-Cann-Categorie-Coolie Khan in the first of his wondrous experiments."

"Ulack," cried Gibbie, interrupting him, "I believe—I submit—it seems a plain parable. Bless me, but this knowledge is a mysterious thing! I can make oaten cake and fair spring water serve my turn."

"I make you welcome to the pure water and the wholesome bread," said Ulack; "it is well with us that our work permits thee such viands. I am, alas! under

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another dispensation, and am obliged, by virtue of my undertaking, to drink, contrary to the wishes of nature, of the liquid called brandy." He took up the cup, and emptied it at one breathing. "Alas!" continued he, "that I should have to open my mouth thus wide for others' good, and swallow what will harm me to bring good fortune to a stranger! but what is, is; and what must be, will be; I must eat, too, by a similar dispensation." He took up a knife and fork, and collop after collop disappeared: he crowned the whole with a second flowing bumper of brandy.

The patience of Gowden Gibbie began to give way —the large promises and the serious swallow of Ulack were weighed in the balance, and nothing could be more nicely adjusted;—the present loss was certain, the future gain unsure. He could suffer no longer.

"Ulack, or whatever they call thee," said Gibbie, "bite about is fair play all the world over; ye are drinking my ale like ditch-water, gulping my brandy, and swallowing gude hung meat by the Scotch pound, and all under pretence of making my fortune. If ye can do me good, do it in the devil's name,—that I should take his name atween christened lips!—and no sit and swallow my hard-won inheritance up."

"That's one whole year added to the period of the fulfilment of the spell," said Ulack; "did I not warn thee against murmuring and repining? You love gold —your life is dedicated to the service of mammon— thou wouldst willingly pawn thy everlasting soul in the acquirement of wealth; yet, in gaining it, thou wilt not be as patient as thou art in shearing the fleece or in pressing the cheese. Thy sinful repining has lengthened the time of the spell to two years instead of one." And having uttered this additional oracle, he helped himself to a third glass.

"O, Ulack," exclaimed Gibbie, in exquisite bitterness of soul, "drink as ye like, eat as ye like, but tell me, I entreat you, what you are going to do with the empty beehive which you have taken from its place and set on the floor beside you. Gracious me! will you waste the

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brandy on a senseless slip of plaited straw? Na! I am ruined now, ruined now."

Ulack, who had poured some brandy into the empty hive, and shaken it round with great anxiety, looked up, and said, "That's another year added to the spell; it was lately two, now it is three. O, man! man! how foolishly dost thou put thy foot into the fountain of thy fortune! Go on."

"I beseech you, Ulack," said Gibbie, "to bear with me, and be merciful. Bear with the impatience of a poor penniless mortal, who would fain turn his groat into a guinea in a quiet and honest way."

"Penniless mortal!" said Ulack, with a sneer; "dost thou think, man, that I don't know Gowden Gibbie? thou art as well known at the foot of Caucasus and on the plains of Tadmor as thou art in thy native vale. Did not Prince Cream-Cann-Categorie-Coolie Khan say to me, 'On the Scottish border lives one whom men call Gowden Gibbie, a sordid and miserly mortal, and yet owner of the hill which contains the liquid gold? He hath of bills and bonds three thousand pounds and odd, contained in a black print Bible, in an oaken chest; and in the same room which holds the said chest stands another strongbox which belonged of old to an English abbot, in token of which, a mitre and cross are carved on the lid,—there hath he stowed away full fifteen hundred spade guineas. Go to him, and work out this grand spell, which is to suck the solid gold out of the earth. Thou wilt readily know him; he is called the churl and the miser: yet hath fortune placed him upon this splendid inheritance.' Go to, man, don't talk of being penniless to me."

Sorely grieved, Gowden Gibbie, when he heard this accurate inventory recited of his wealth, a shadow of suspicion overclouded for a moment his brow; he thought, "Can this man have gained his knowledge by magic or by personal examination?" and he looked on Ulack as if he would have looked him through; but his long white hair, sun-burnt complexion, and patriarchal look baffled all surmises, and he was lost in wonder at such unheard-of knowledge.

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Ulack seemed now to think that it was time to shift the scene of operations; he lifted the empty hive and said, "The hour is at hand, bring brandy and bring ale, and take that spade and come with me, and see that ye walk in my shadow, and stop when I stop. Time is, and time comes not again."

At this moment the latch was raised, when a strange man, hot with running, came in and said, "He's gaun gear, gaun gear, gude advice canna haud him; he winna shoot oure the twalt hour; he grips at the blankets, and cries out about the gear he maun leave; he's lying with a bag o' gowd in his hand and another at his head, and casting it awa in handfuls. I'm ill awa when spade guineas are fleeing. Come, for gude-sake come; d'ye think the man's breath will stay your time; come, can ye no come, and say a soothing word or sae by way o' prayer; ye ken he's ay charmed with your words."

Gibbie looked earnestly in the face of this eager messenger, and said, "Wha may ye be now, and wha is the man that ye summon me to see with such a clamorous tongue? It canna be that auld Sicker Sawney is going at last?"

"My certa lad," said the intruder, "ye Sicker Sawney weel: can ye no gie douce fowk their ain christened name? My master's name is Alexander Moneys, an auld name and a respected; moreover he's portioner of Gripantauk, which his name has held since the persecution, and I'm his familiar servant, and they call me New-come-John."

Gibbie was sorely puzzled; he seized Ulack by the sleeve, and led him aside. "There's brandy in the bottle, there's water on the fire, and sugar in the aumrie, make yourself a cheerer, and let this thing stand oure till I return. This man, whom we call Sicker Sawney, is a perfect mint of money, maist as rich as our hill; he has gowd in hohsens, and hoards as auld as sax kings' reigns. I have seen it! I have seen it! The distance is but twa miles, and I shall miss a glorious pose; for I ken he will gie it all to me,

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wha kens the way to keep it thegether. He is casting it frae him like a tree shedding leaves in November, just like fanners blawing awa chaff, and I maun rin to the gathering."

Ulack grew angry. "I have said that the hour is come. The planetary hour which my great master Prince Cream-Cann-Categorie-Coolie Khan taught me is at hand, and death will stay his dart and woman suspend her will, but the moment of fate cannot be put off; come, walk in my shadow, and stop when I stop; this work must be begun and finished within the hour, else wo be to us both."

Gibbie rubbed his hands in gladness, and cried, "It will do yet, it will do yet, friend. New-come-John, what's your name, you ken the laird surely canna take his departure before gray daylight; come now, tell me the truth, what says the doctor?" and he slipped a piece of silver into his hand.

"'Deed, gudeman," said the messenger, "there's twa doctors and a lawyer yonder, and the minister of the parish is on the road, but his heart's hale, and his ee's bright, and if ye should have your prayers to say afore ye leave your ain house, ye can remember my poor master in them. I dare say that'll pass muster where prayers are of avail."

"That will do, Ulack, that will do," said Gibbie. "Now, friend, ye'll just remain here a short hour, and I'm yere servant. But ye'll want company. Bauldy, my bairn, Bauldy, my pet, come hither, ye are wanted."

At this summons a human form, which had hitherto escaped the eye of Ulack, began to rouse and bestir himself in the wide chimney-corner, where he lay curled up like a snake among empty sacks, and broom, and shelling-seeds. His rough, bushy, and uncombed hair hung about his eyes and ears in true dreamy disorder, his feet and legs were bare, and his close-fitted dress, made of coarse gray plaiden, so suited with his complexion, that clothes and man seemed all of a piece, with the exception of his eyes, which were wild and shining, and touched with harmless insanity. Bauldy

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sprung suddenly to his feet, shook dust and slumber from him, came forward, looked on Ulack, and on New-come-John, gave a chuckling laugh and cried, "Wha's fool now? wha's fool now? could ye no lie still in your snug graves down by yonder, but ye maun come and pu' peaceable fowk out o' their beds in the douse hour of the night?"

"Bauldy, my bairn, Bauldy, my pet," said Gibbie, in a soothing tone, "these men are living; they were never in the grave, nor yet dead."

"No dead!" cried Bauldy, with a wild laugh, "then the faut lies in the hemp, and the laxity o' the tow; I dreamed that the tane was hanged for murder, and the tother for stealing sheep. But they mauna mind me, they mauna mind me; I sometimes think that I am dead myself, and yet I jalouse again I'm living: feel ye that?" and without more ado he gave the messenger called New-come-John such a punch in the ribs as made him stagger.

"O! never mind him, never mind the harmless innocent," said Gowden Gibbie, "but sit ye down, and make the time short with a cheerer of brandy, and be sure and dinna cross poor Bauldy, for, gomeral though he be, he has a strong arm and a ready hand: and hear ye me—as ye would answer for committing sins, on no account give him one drop of brandy, for besides being wastery, it will stir him up, and make him terrible to be seen. I shall be back within the hour, and then we can hie away to Gripantauk."

"Wha's fool now? wha's fool?" said Bauldy, seating himself by the hearth, and spreading his palms upon both knees, by the side of New-come-John.

They had only reached the threshold, when Ulack said, "Sordid peasant, thou wilt undo all—cast all coin out of thy pocket—the presence of metal which has been debased in the dirty toils of traffic will cause the liquid gold to remain unfrozen in the hill till dooms day." This was a cheerful assurance to Gowden Gibbie, who was not without some secret misgivings concerning the motives of his companion. Away he

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went with a lightened heart, treading circumspectly in the shadow of Ulack, and making a penny spin from his finger and thumb into the little rill which skirted the foot of the hill of promise. "Ay, now," said the disciple of Prince Cream-Cann-Categorie-Coolie Khan "the spell will work freely."

CHAPTER III.

They soon reached the hill; the moon looked over its summit, and shot a faint light down its side, touching a rock here and a bush there, gilding the dewy backs of the reposing sheep, and dancing in the bickering stream which, rising in the miser's well, was soon lost to sight in a thick wood, whence its din, as it leaped from rock to rock, was diffused for miles around. Up they climbed over part of the hill, and halting by the well, Ulack drew a circle, half in moonshine and half in shadow, the diameter and more of the hive, and pointing to the spade, motioned with his feet and hand for Gibbie to dig. He dug a hole three feet deep, laying the earth on one side, and the circular sod on the other. Ulack suddenly laying his hand on Gibbie's arm, whispered, "Look at the moon; she says, Proceed! the stars give their consent—one planet indeed seems a little unwilling; there is a time for all things; and the time is come for us. O! Prince Cream-Cann-Categorie-Coolie Khan, the seven dervishes of Damascus, the seven wise men of Mount Ararat, be propitious and prosper this wondrous labour!" So saying, he placed the old hive carefully in the bottom of the hole, filled it round with earth, which he kneaded carefully in, and replaced the circular turf so neatly that the whole seemed undisturbed ground.

Much marvelled Gowden Gibbie when he saw all this; he looked as he was bid at both moon and stars;

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but in his sight they shone as usual; there was not the least appearance of consciousness about them. He was afraid to speak lest he should undo the spell, and looked anxiously at his companion, who performed the whole affair orderly and with a grave composure. "The work's done, and done discreetly," said Ulack, "all that is wanting is time, and time will come. Ay! art thou there? that's right too; its no for naught that ye come. Gibbie, dare ye look where I look? Yon little dark creature, three span high, with a tail like a flail, and eyes like lighted candles, is my little familiar demon of the mine; he is compelled to stand watch and ward over one experiment, even in his own despite; shall I motion him nearer? for it's unsafe to speak to him."

"He is near enough," said Gibbie, in a visible tremor; "yet I canna just say that I see him."

"Then I forbode disappointment in this spell," said the magician; "but there is a charm for it yet; drink that, then look and tell me what thou seest;" and he held him out a cup of ale.

Gibbie allowed the drink to run slowly down; for a stranger, he observed, should aye walk a new road leisurely. Taking his mouth from the cup, he shook his head, and said, "I see just what I saw before, unless, indeed, yon thing which I would take for the shadow of the saughbush should be the emissary."

"That's better, but it won't do yet; I must raise it higher," said Ulack, repeating the charm in stronger materials; "drink that, and look on the sky, and tell me what thou seest; we must try heaven, since earth refuses;" and he held out a cup of brandy.

With a sore heart and a discomposed brow, Gibbie emptied the cup, which held half a pint, and looked at the sky with all his might, for the brandy was strong, and the ale was far from weak, and his eyes were inclined to be giddy.

"I see two moons," said Gibbie, "one horned, and the other cowed; and the stars seem dancing Highland reels."

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"That will do for the sky," said Ulack; "take the tother cup, and then look at the earth."

Gibbie did as he was bid, and exclaimed, "The earth, her hills are running round, and the streams are gaun backwards, and all is bright as if ten thousand will-o'-wisps were skelping away at gig and reel. I think I can see the familiar of the mine now."

"The spell is sound, and sure, and complete," exclaimed Ulack; "so sit down with me, and listen to my words."

Gibbie sat willingly down, for he was unable to stand quite steady, and his companion thus addressed him: "Rejoice, Gilbert, whom men call Gowden Gibbie; for the time when that name will be amply earned is close at hand. This hill, as I partly intimated before, is as full of liquid gold as the cell of the bee in October is full of honey; gold grows in the grass, shines in the flowers, and glitters in the running streams, visible to all. I have, as Prince Cream-Cann-Categorie-Coolie Khan directed, prepared the charm and cast a sinless spell. I have placed a charmed hive in the bosom of the hill, which will be filled with such treasure as shall enrich thee. The first year the drops will be hanging as thickly in it as drops of dew in the bosom of a rose."

Gowden Gibbie opened his eyes in wonder, till the disks expanded as wide as saucers; he poured brandy into a glass, and holding it out, said, "O! wondrous man, drink, drink; tell me what will be on the second year—drink, drink."

"At the end of the second year," said Ulack, "the coagulated gold will be as thick in the hive as combs of honey when the season of flowers is over."

Gibbie filled the glass again with brandy, and exclaimed, "Marvellous! marvellous! drink, I entreat you, drink. I never heard so sweet a story. Gold as plentiful as honeycomb! coagulated gold! a grand expression, and means lumps, I'll warrant—goud in gowpins."

"Even so," said Ulack, doing at the same time needful reverence to the proffered brandy; "at the end of the

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third year the hive will be filled with pure and portable treasure-gold, fit for the crucible and the mint-press—all metal and no dross."

"O man! marvellous man!" exclaimed Gibbie, "will ye no drink?—take another draught of the brandy—and are ye sure now that all this will come to pass? O! I'll long remember the name of Ulack and Prince Cream-Cann-Camsteric-Cannie-Cann—they are my benefactors!"

He poured out another, the sole remaining glass of brandy. Ulack, steadying himself as well as he could, said, with some interruptions of a cough, "Thou art an impatient believer in the Golden Mystery, and hast already lost two years' enjoyment of this treasure—tempt not thy fortune further, lest peradventure seven years be added to the three. Listen to the law of my great master Prince Cream—why need I repeat his sacred name so often in a sinful and blinded land like this! Listen, I say, to the law. Touch not the magic hive—tell to no one—write to no one—sign to no one—whisper to no one—swear to no one, and sing to no one that such a matter exists, till three years, three hours, and three minutes are come and gone, and then take seven strong men with you—dig up—carry home, and enjoy thy treasure. Disobey, and the spell which gathers the gold will dissolve and produce nothing, as surely as I swallow this brandy." He drank the liquor, threw down the glass, seized Gibbie by the hand, and wringing it till the blood nearly started from beneath the nails, added, "Farewell; I go to a far land, perchance I may not see thee again; and yet I think on't, I may. Make gold, hoard gold, and work thyself out of thy own door with it, even as bees work themselves out of their hives with honey. Farewell, Lord Gilbert of the Golden Hill." And away he went with a hasty and unsteady step, and was seen no more.

Homewards went Gowden Gibbie, looking frequently back at the hill, which rose round and bright in the beams of the moon, nor did he fail to think a little of his friend Ulack. His thoughts dwelt much on the weak-

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tress of this eastern magician, in coming with a valuable secret all the way from Tadmor in the wilderness, for the purpose of enriching a perfect stranger: he broke into loud and uncontrollable laughter, and cried, "Well, Ulack, ye are a prince at casting spells, nor are ye deficient in the art of dram-drinking; but wow, man, ye are mentally soft, and in worldly matters but a mere goose, and can nae mair haud the candle to Gowden Gibbie than a paddock can chant like a laverock. There's a wondrous soft place in that wise head now of yours; and I dare say Prince Cream-Cann-Scuttle-Cann is marvellously deficient in the same place. But here's my ain house. What can be the matter? there's a light in the windows equal to twenty candles, and a reek coming out at the lum-head as thick as a corn sack; and there's daft Bauldy bleezing away and singing—what's to happen next?" A tremor took his knees, and he could scarcely make his way to his own threshold.

Gibbie held up his hands when he entered. A chair and two stools were on the fire, and already in flame; a large bacon-ham lay above them, and all united to raise a blaze which ascended half-way up the chimney. The table was set on the middle of the floor, and on the top of that sat poor Bauldy—an old rusty sword girded round him, a pewter basin on his head, and a pot-stick in his hand; and with a look which he imagined to be regal, for he had assumed some state, he was performing the part of a king with all his might. An empty brandy-bottle lay at his side, and explained the cause of all this inattention. Gibbie displayed unlooked-for patience. "Bauldy, my bairn—Bauldy, my dow, what's the meaning of all this, and where's New-come-John?" The answer returned was the following verse:—

"King Archibald sat on his high throne,
With nobles at his knee,
There came a man and cried 'A boon,
Crowned king, I crave of thee;
It's a' to grip twa traitors strang,
And hang them on a tree.'"

"But, Bauldy, my bairn—Bauldy, my dow," said

Gibbie in his softest tone, "come down hinnie, and tell me all about this. Ye ken I maun hie awa to the dying portioner. I'm owre lang here already."

Bauldy, however, only continued his ballad—

"'Go, take them, take them,' said the king,
And high he held his hand,
'And hang them up among the crows;
For one by wicked hand,
And one by sinful tongue, hath robbed
The liegemen of my land.'"

Gibbie began to lose all patience—"Come down, ye born gomeral," he exclaimed, "and don't sit crooning there in the middle of all this mischief. Lord! an it were na that the blessed hive will pay sweetly for a', I wad gang as demented as thy daft sell. Come down, I say! and saddle my horse, and let me owre the hill to the sick and dying sinner." It was all in vain, he only sung the louder, but in a different spirit.

"The bit's in his lip,
And the spur in his flank,
He is running in foam
Where the rushes are rank;
And he that sits on him
May spur him in pride,
He has gold in his pockets,
And well may he ride."

"O! I have ye now! I have ye now! poor kindly innocent!" cried Gowden Gibbie; "I am harried out of house and hall, and all by that flaffing gar-me-trow, New-come-John."

Away he now flew to his private chamber—found the door wrenched from the hinges—a candle burning, and his large oaken chest standing with its lid as open as the door of a change-house. "O! my bonnie bonnet-pieces, and my braw bonds!" groaned Gibbie, with growing agony of soul, "evil hands have been upon you; but praise be blest, the sheepskin's safe—but my golden nest! my real, little, weel hained hive of minted gowd has ta'en wing. O! its like robbing the kirk, and waur—the kirk can cover the disaster with the ready garment of faith, but what will supply the place of three

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hundred and fifteen gude gowden Ann Stuarts? Now, let me see; has the reiver found his way to my secret hoard—to my Abr'am's bosom, as I call it, where I fly for consolation when wool falls in price? Na, na, he has nae found thee out—the eye would be a gleg ane that could find out my mysterious pose in the floor with a lid of hewn stone. Ay, ay, it's safe, and the skaith, though dreadful enough to justify suicide, can be amended, and will be amended in three years. Ah! Ulack, my kind and conscientious Ulack, this comes of scoffing at thee and thy simplicity. What a luck that I didna gang awa to see my auld leal friend of Gripantauk! God, but he would have given me a hearing! and scored me out of his will, and that would have been worse. But an ever I can meet with that scamp who called himself New-come-John, see an he diana get acquaint with the jails of Dumfries or Carlisle, for I wotnae which is nearest."

Gowden Gibbie set his house in order, sent a tale through the land that he had been robbed of all he had;—he called it one thousand, and romance called it three;—and added, the way that it had been accomplished was by filling the faithful Bauldy fou with brandy. "Yet I'm na sure," quoth he to himself, "but this loss may be productive of gain. I can drive a harder bargain with the mercy of mankind. I'm the unfortunate person whose house was plundered of all he possessed—give him a tearing pennyworth, diana beat him down in his price, ye may come to want yoursel. Conscience! but I think this hardship will prove a benefit, only let me keep a calm sough about the extent of my loss."

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CHAPTER IV.

Happiness was again restored to the dwelling of Gowden Gibbie, and fortune seemed willing to mark him out for her own, and plant her banner on his threshold. His chief solace lay with the charmed hive on the hill, and all losses seemed trivial compared to the coming deluge of gain. The happy man sat, or walked, always rapt and inspired. The whole world seemed like a treasure-chest, of which he had accidentally found the key, and he was ever opening it in imagination, and envying the unsummable contents. But no splendid palaces, no magnificent dresses, no bevy of servants, nor even the presence of ladies of high or low degree appeared in these pictures of enjoyment which his fancy loved to paint; he saw only heaps of money and bars of gold, by the light of a little lamp which he held in his own hand, while Bauldy kept watch and ward with the brandy-bottle, far from the reach of his hand. The music, which he imagined he heard was the sound of his patent locks as he undid them with the key—no additional dish appeared on his table, no extra fuel was added to the fire; his narrow soul did not expand with his fortune, but seemed, like a snail, to retreat within its sordid shell.

Eyes are hurt by excess of light, and hearts may be injured by an overflow of happiness; and so it seemed to fare with Gowden Gibbie. The impatience of his nature, like an internal fire, was silently consuming him. He counted the months and the days, and thought the year would never be done. He longed to examine the charmed hive, to give a hint to the world how rich he would soon become; and he loved to wander around the hill, and nigh the miner's well, and say to himself, "Three years, three years, and one of these flown!—O! happy, happy Gibbie! thy name's no be for naught.

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Now the drops of gold will be hanging in the hive like dew-drops in the bosom of the rose. O! I mind the words weel; and then when the second year is come and gone, the coagulated gold will be hanging as thick and gross as the honeycomb; and oh! three years—seven men to carry thee hame, my beloved treasure—gold—nothing but pure gold, fit for the crucible and the mint. I mind the words weel."

The work of the world required to be done meanwhile—there came lambs to sell, sheep to shear, and wool to take to market, and that intercourse to maintain with society which causes wealth to increase and enables man to live. Gowden Gibbie went to a lamb-fair. The place was far from his house—bargains were not easy to make—money was obstinate in coming in, and the sun was set two hours or more before he reached the limits of his own ground. His road lay among pastoral hills, and he so contrived it that he approached within sight of the miner's well—a place he loved much to muse upon. His horse—for he was mounted—enjoyed the luxury of his own free will, for neither spur nor whip had the rider—spurs were expensive, and causing the horse to start and prance, consumed shoes. To a whip some of the same objections applied; and the animal, conscious of the miserable provender which lay in its rack at home, took a mouthful of tender grass here and another mouthful there; and when it came to the rivulet bank, where the sward was green and plentiful, it fairly stood still and began to supper itself. Gibbie struck with his unarmed heels, coaxed, and clapped, and urged; but his horse made no other acknowledgment to his words than a hasty switch of its tail and a resenting kick of its heels. "The mickle devil may drive ye for me!" exclaimed Gibbie, losing all patience;—he had not well spoken the words, till a sharp blow from some unseen hand made the horse spring a fathom forward, and away it went at the gallop.

When his horse slackened in its speed the rider looked behind to see who had struck this unsere-

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monious blow, and saw a man in a close-buttoned suit of raven gray, a hat and plume, and a cloak, which streamed over his horse's rump, riding close behind him. His emotion was little short of trembling when he beheld this equestrian apparition; for the road was private, and led nowhere but to his own house; and, moreover, was lonely, and had earned an indifferent name of old; in short, it had the reputation of being haunted. To add to the embarrassment of Gibbie, the stranger began to sing a rough and swaggering song—his strong harsh voice disturbed the cows and scared the sheep; these were the words:—

HOBBIE HALL.

I.

My name is Hobbie Hall,
Yield or die, yield or die,
My name is Hobbie Hall,
Yield or die.
My name is Hobbie Hall,
And I rob both great and small,
But my neck must pay for all—
Yield or die!

II.

There is red gold on the road,
Yield or die, yield or die,
There is red gold on the road,
Yield or die.
There is red gold on the road,
Look on these pieces broad,
I have robbed a priest, by God—
Yield or die!

III.

All have heard of Hobbie Hall,
Yield or die, yield or die,
All have heard of Hobbie Hall,
Yield or die.
With crossed face and whistling ball,
He has fortune at his call,
By the Lord, he's lord of all!
Yield or die!

The stranger, having concluded this rough and irreverent ditty, moved his horse hastily forward, and thus accosted Gowden Gibbie: "A fair good even to thee, friend; how go markets?"

To this interrogation, Gibbie answered, "E'en

indifferent—very indifferent;" and he urged on his horse, willing to get rid of one whom he regarded as an uncannie customer.

"Wool, how sells it? mutton, what is the price?" inquired the stranger.

"Alack-a-day," answered Gibbie, "no one speculates now, either in money or in wool; and as for the penny silver, they haud a grip on't like a hawk by a hen chicken. I have nae turned coin to-day, and have been obliged to take this by-road home to escape the standing grievance of toll-bars."

The stranger said sharply, "I heard gold chink in thy pocket as thou rodest from the brook—but fear not, I am no coveter of gold."

"O, Hobbie Hall!" exclaimed Gibbie, "I am a poor miserable creature—I was robbed of a thousand gold guineas by a cunning limmer, who called himself New-come-John—and all that I have in the wide world is the auld horse I ride on and half a score of ewes—and maybe a piece of silver, or aiblins gold, but they are baith keepsakes of my mother's; sad memorials, Hobbie Hall—and I'm sure ye'll spare them."

It was now the stranger's turn to make exclamations:—"Why, thou goose," said he, "Hobbie Hall is the hero of an old song, and his bones have dropped from the gibbet a century ago. I am a peaceable wayfarer, and a stranger too; and am come to seek a man called Gilbert of the Golden Hill, whom the peasants called Gowden Gibbie; a name well known in Crim Tartary and Cochin China, and at the court of the Prince Cream-Cann-Categorie-Coolie Khan, in the centre of Bassarabia."

Gibbie sat perpendicularly on his saddle, put on a look of consequence, and muttered to himself, "It is a brother-in-craft with my magician Ulack, and I'll wager comes charged with some message anent the hiving of the liquid gold. Friend," said he, alond, "I am he whom ye seek. I am Gilbert of the Golden Hill, commonly called Gowden Gibbie—known, for aught I know, in Crim Tartary and Cochin China, and at the

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court of Prince Cream-Cann-Categorie-Coolie Khan; what is your will with me?"

The traveller drew his rein, stared on Gowden Gibbie, and exclaimed, "Impossible! accustomed as I am to things marvellous, I cannot believe an assertion so incredible. What, *thou!* thou with a sorry horse, threadbare dress, squalid looks, covetous eyes, and soul base and sordid? *Thou*, a muckworm, crawling on the dunghill of creation,—*thou* the lord of the Golden Hill! I cannot believe it, though I can believe much."

"Believe or no, even as thou wilt," said Gilbert; "I was born beside the hill, nursed beside the hill, and educated beside the hill; more than that, my father left me the hill, and many a score of sheep, and many a thousand lambs, and many a fleece of fair wool have I sold off the hill; and by and attour the hill's mine, and shall be mine, if all the Chams of Cream Tartary and Cochin China had sworn to the contrary."

The stranger took off his hat, bowed to his horse's mane, and said, with a tone of humility, "Lord of the hill of liquid gold, I do thee honour; and I greet thee from a tried friend and true, Ulack the chief magician at the court of Prince Cream-Cann-Categórie-Coolie Khan of Bassarabia."

"Ulack!" said Gibbie, "what, my own old, wise, prudent friend Ulack—and how fares he?"

"As well as he wishes," replied the traveller. "Alas! his whole thoughts are on the advancement of mysterial science, and for the advantage of others. Besides the art of extracting liquid gold, he has discovered the art of extracting liquid diamonds; and is now somewhere in the centre of India making the liquid gems come from the earth like melted glass from the furnace. He wears a shirt of sackcloth girt with a rope of hair, goes barefooted, drinks water and eats pulse—ye would scarcely know him from a skeleton; he will kill himself,—but then he knows it is for the good of mankind."

"Aweel," said Gibbie, "I have no doubt that Provi-

dence has a wise purpose in it; and that premature death here will bring surer happiness hereafter. I'm thinking ye'll have something to say to me from our worthy friend Ulack, and as we cannot well find a quieter place than this, ye may e'en say your say here."

"That I would, gladly," replied the messenger, "for I am on a journey of moment, but I cannot deliver the message any where else than on the spot where the spell was wrought, wherever that may be."

"I wonder," muttered Gibbie to himself, "if the message maun be extracted by means of roasted collops and cupfuls of brandy. Well then, friend," he added aloud, "that was at my own fireside, and we are nae sae far from it; here's the house."

He halted at the door and shouted, "Bauldy, my bonnie man! Bauldy, my dow! come out and stable the stranger's horse. Have ye ridden him all the way from Cochin China?"

"Some three thousand and odd miles," replied the stranger; "swam several friths—a mere trifle, and necessary to moisten the dust on his hoofs."

The door now opened, and out came Bauldy; he fixed his eyes on the stranger, who sat fair and visible in the clear moonlight, and instead of taking his horse or helping him to dismount, he sung out,

"'O welcome,' said King Archibald,
'Come fill the cup with wine,
And thou shalt drink thy ladye-love,
And I will pledge thee mine.'
A belted knight cried, 'Nay, my liege,'
A belted knight cried, 'Nay,
His ladye-love is sordid gold—'"

"There's a hole i' the ballad, however," continued Bauldy, "and it's a pity, for it's a prime ane, and was made lang syne when there were reivers in the land;" he paused a moment, and cried, "now I can manage it! but will you no come in; light, and venture in, light, and venture in!" and seizing the bridle of the horse, the stranger dismounted and strode into the house, not unwilling, it would seem, to escape from the curious and searching looks with which the other regarded him.

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Bauldy now seized his master by the arm, and dragged him, with many a wink and nod towards the stable. "Gibbie," he whispered, "I'm na sae daft as ye trow, or as I gar folk believe; gang cannily into the secret-chamer, and bolt yersel in, and haud by Abram's bosom like grim death, else ye'll be harried; that's New-come-John—leave him to me, I'll manage him brawly. D'ye want to hang him, or never to see him mair? I say hang; I never saw a man hanged in my life."

"O never let me see him mair, Bauldy, my bairn! we'se no hang him, Bauldy, my dow; but are ye sure ye can manage him?"

Bauldy waved his master away, and whistling loudly secured the horses in the stable, and putting the key in his pocket returned into the house.

CHAPTER V.

A CLEAR fire sparkled on the hearth of Gilbert's dwelling, a little lamp added its slender light to the glare of the fire, and there sat the stranger with apparent complacency. Bauldy drew in a chair and sat down beside him, laying his hands as he laid his, and putting on the same kind of circumspect and suspicious look. "A capital pair, a capital pair," said Bauldy; "now which is the fool and which is the knave?—Aha! that's a queer quastion."

"Bauldy, my bairn, Bauldy, my dow," said the other, "will ye bid your master come? time presses, business urges, and I maun be gone.

"Ye'll never see my master, as ye call him, mair," answered the other; "he's now in Abram's bosom."

"Dead!" exclaimed the stranger, "that cannot be."

"As dead," quoth Bauldy, "as your master Gripen-

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tauk was when ye were New-come-John. Aha! is that a sair place?"

The traveller started up and said, "Damnation, d'ye know me?" and looked about, undecided what to do.

"Know ye!" said Bauldy, "and wherefore no? I never saw the face once that I know not again, and my master kens ye too, and what's waur, the gallows will ken ye, and I want ye hanged. I never saw a man hanged in my life."

The stranger had by this time reached the threshold; "My horse," he said.

"Ay, your honour's horse," answered Bauldy.

"I say, my horse, fool," said the other.

"And I say, your horse, knave," responded Bauldy; "the key of the stable door's in my pouch—ye'll have some skill and strength to get it."

The stranger now grasped Bauldy by the collar; Bauldy seized him in return. A short struggle ensued, when the stranger received such a fall as seemed to crush his whole frame.

"Wha's fool now?" shouted Bauldy, "wha's fool now? New-come-John, lie ye there; ye ken what ye did among my master's gowd lang syne; but, de'il as ye are, rise and rin, for my master is gone for Simon Brodie, the shepherd, and his three sons, and ye will be grabbed and neckished."

The fallen man started to his feet, and fled like quicksilver, and Bauldy returned singing to his fireside, and cried, "Come out, master, come out and take charge of your house, and let me be daft again; this wisdom is a painful garment—motley is the pleasanter wear."

"Bauldy, my dow—Bauldy, my bairn," said Gibbie, making his appearance, "I shall make a man of thee for this."

"That's mair than a better hand could do," said Bauldy. "I wad rather ye wad make my bed ell deep of straw, and lay three sacks aboon me."

"It shall be done," answered Gibbie.

These attempts on the treasure of Gibbie were now

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talked of far and wide; some pitied him for his wealth, and some called him sordid, and all declared that he would of a surety bury his gold in some lonely place, and die and leave the secret undivulged. This belief received strong confirmation, when it was told that he loved to wander on one of his hills by moonlight, and that on Sunday he was frequently seen sitting by the miner's well, and looking wistfully to a little green knoll which rose like a wart from the ascent of the hill. There rumour said he had buried his treasure; and there, or near there, he was sought by those who desired to find him. All this was not unknown to that numerous class of industrious men to whom eastern Ulack and his comrades belonged, and Gowden Gibbie was marked out as a subject that came nicely within a certain circuit of country which the society resolved to make experiments on. One of the number, a southron by birth, and a stranger, made a memorandum of the marks of his intended victim, and, instructed by Ulack, known afterward in the Newgate Calendar by the name of Gipsy Geordie, and by his comrade New-come-John, alias John Crombie, he departed on his mission.

Great was the alarm of Gowden Gibbie, as he took his customary stroll one moonlight night, to see a man start up from the ground within throw of a quoit from the place where his treasure-hive was hid. "What wantest thou here, friend, among my sheep, at this hour?" said Gibbie. "Ye're here for mae gude."

"Curse thy sheep and thee both," said the southron; "I want thy gold—where is it hid?—show me the box—here's the key that will open it." And he held a handsome pistol, with a patent lock and hair trigger, within an inch of Gibbie's nose. "Show me thy gold, I say, else I shall pull this little ticklish piece of iron, called a trigger."

With many a sigh and many a groan, poor Gibbie took his way to the spot where the hive was hid, and turned to his enemy and said, "Ye will spoil a grand experiment—this hill is full of liquid gold as an

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orange is of moisture, and a wise man hath come from a far land to teach me how to obtain it. The secret will not be ripe for disclosure this long twelvemonth yet; I hope ye'll no persist, for it will spoil a grand experiment."

"Ay, ay; a likely tale, but it won't pass muster, master," said the other; "you can't come the romantic over me, as ye did with New-come-John. Stir—shake your pins—dig up the dust—or damme—" and he menaced him with the pistol.

Thus urged and endangered, poor Gibbie dug up the hive, turned it round and round, and cried, "There, I tauld that ye wad spoil a grand experiment; the golden combs are coagulating, as I'm a ruined sinner. O! wilful, sinful man! the riches of Solomon's temple were but a trifle to the treasures which this hill contains, and which this charmed hive would have gathered. In another year it would have been filled with solid gold, instead of these gathering drops. O! ye have muckle to answer for! Now life's naught;" and he threw himself resolutely down, and refused all comfort, replying to the repeated inquiries of the robber, "Shoot me, shoot me—life's no worth a brass bodle now—shoot me, put me out of pain!"

"Confound my body and smash my limbs!" muttered his assailant, replacing his pistol in his pocket; this can be no sharp-witted miser—he is the parish fool, by gemini; and I have come fifty miles and odd to rob a born idiot! A hive of treasure, and bees which gathered gold? I never heard the like on't—I'll be sweetly laughed at in the profession, if this gets wind. Friend," he added, touching Gibbie with his foot, "can ye keep a secret?"

"Eh, what will ye give me?" answered Gibbie.

"This is a Scotch fool now," said the other, "not so far gone in his wits as we in the south; there's half a guinea for thee—and stay, a word of advice—shave thy head, wear a clay cap, and keep at home in the full of the moon." So saying he went away.

When Gibbie returned home, he sat down and wept,

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and Bauldy sat beside him and laughed. Men came far and near to hear his wonderful story, and many went away shaking their heads and saying, "Heard ever a Christian lug sic a leesome-looking tale, as that of the Charmed Hive and the Liquid Gold? Henceforth let us call him Gowden Gibbie nae mair—let his name be Goose Gibbie."

The new name stuck, and both are inscribed on his gravestone in the parish kirkyard where he lies side by side with his friend and servant Bauldy, who, by reflecting persons who draw morals from men's lives, came afterward to be called King Archibald.

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THE

BRIDAL OF BORTHWICK.

BY D. M. MOIR.*

"Dear, leave thy home, and come with me,
That scorn the world for love of thee;
Thou shalt have wool, thou shalt have silk,
Thou shalt have honey, wine, and milk;
Thou shalt have all, for all is due
Where thoughts are free and love is true."

Earl of Pembroke.

LADY JEMIMA DE BORTHWICK was not more remarkable for her bearing than for her strong passions. Descended from a long line of high progenitors, she had, perhaps, allowed overmuch the consciousness of her nobility to hold in abeyance the milder and more feminine graces of her nature. This aristocratic disposition, let it, however, in charity be acknowledged, was never allowed to display itself in tyrannous orders or actions, but left itself to be inferred from her haughty reserve, the splendour of her usual attire, and her strict attention to preserve her children from vulgar contamination.

Had fortune established them somewhat lower in the scale of society, this secluding system of their parent might, perhaps, have cost them more than it was their lot to feel; for the lawns and gardens around the fine castle of Borthwick afforded them sufficient scope for air and exercise.

At the time of our little narrative, Lord de Borthwick

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was abroad at the court of France, at the head of an embassy from Holyrood; and his lady kept herself almost shut up within the walls of the castle, one of the most splendid and redoubtable structures of the kind in all Scotland, whether considered as a place of residence or defence; though the value of a home, in those troubled times, was estimated less by its comfort than its security. Human foresight, however, is frail; for notwithstanding its being almost surrounded by a rivulet named the Gore, denying access save by a perron of stone raised to the height of the first story, and thence communicating by a drawbridge with the gate of the tower, it did not prevent the very simple accident which is the basis of the following little tale.

Not only was the old family nurse prohibited from carrying the children beyond the grounds in the immediate neighbourhood of the castle, but they were never, on any account, permitted to go out without her attendance. It chanced, however, that the orchard-gate had been one day left open; and while the nurse, seated in the shade of a large cherry-tree, was amusing Margery, the eldest daughter, with some verses of an old song as she plied her needlework, Lilian, the younger of the two, in her frolicsome chase of a butterfly, made her way out at it. The day was fine, and all the air musical with birds. The nurse sang, and the young lady listened; but when Lilian was missed and called for, Lilian was nowhere to be found.

Conscious of her lady's impetuous temper, and terrified for the consequences of her own indiscretion, the old nurse lost the only chance of regaining her strayed charge by making the affair known, and calling in the domestics to her assistance. Two hours were suffered to elapse in fruitless search; the gardens—the shrubberies—the parks—nay, even the apartments of the castle itself had all to no purpose been gone through, ere, approaching the focus of their dismay, Margery at length burst from the side of the old woman, and, running with tears in her eyes to the chamber of her mother, told her that Lilian was nowhere to be found.

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The abruptness of the disclosure threw the unfortunate lady, as might have been anticipated, into a severe swoon, from which she was not for a considerable time, and with some difficulty, recovered. Then, indeed, did a commotion commence worthy of traditional record; for the alarm-bells were set a-jingling so sincerely in earnest, that they were answered from the towers of Crichton Castle on the one hand, and Oxenford on the other. The steeds were hurried from their stalls, and twenty serving-men were in a few minutes mounted, and scouring the country in every direction; the bugles of one party responding to the bugles of another, and thus keeping up a chain of observation and intelligence. Every half-hour a message was sent up to the warden to learn if any one was seen returning from among the hills with happy tidings; but noon matured into afternoon, and afternoon waned into evening; in purple and gold the sun was descending behind the summits of the western Pentlands, and the bat was already abroad flapping his leathern wings, ere, one after another, dropped in jaded steed and man, without having gained trace or intelligence of the lost child.

This was a grievous calamity for the house of Borthwick; and they judge harshly of its lady who suppose that under the dazzling and proud exterior dwelt none of the natural affections peculiar to a mother. The opposite may be assevered to have been the fact, for the distraction of her mind amounted almost to insanity; the regards which she had been accustomed to withhold from the great mass of society finding their almost only outlet in maternal tenderness. Day after day passed over, and day after day search was repeated in vain. Rewards were offered, but no one ever came forward to claim them; and when Lord de Borthwick returned from abroad, he found his fair little Lilian vanished, no one knew where, and his lady, with the whole household, in mourning.

Year after year came to pass away, and Lilian de Borthwick was as one who had never been, except in the unsatisfied recollection of her parents. It was con-

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cluded, either that she had wandered into the woods, and, losing herself in their recesses, perished of hunger, or had fallen into some of the streams in attempting to find her way back to the castle. It was long afterward discovered, however, the truth of the story ran in neither of these channels.

II.

Though the time when the gipsies, or wandering Egyptians, first appeared in Scotland be not exactly ascertained, the earliest authenticated notice of them hitherto met with is in a letter of James the Fourth to the King of Denmark, soliciting the extension of his royal uncle's munificence to a party of them who were travelling back to their native country on the banks of the Nile.

At the period of our narrative, they had multiplied to a considerable extent, and overrun in an especial manner the districts in the south-east of Scotland, having at Kirkyetholm, in Roxburghshire—a village imbosomed among the Cheviot-hills—a kind of general rendezvous. This place the vagrant tribe considered as their head-quarters; and, better to bring a people who acknowledged no claims of birthright or citizenship within the pale of justice, the lords in council had granted particular powers to the head of their clan, under the style of Lord and Earl of Little Egypt. Nor were the wandering community without their especial utility at a time and in a country where regular merchants were not to be met with save in the towns and cities; for though notoriously given to petty plunder, and, consequently, under a particular public surveillance, they atoned for this, in some measure, by acting as tinkers, and carrying about articles of crockery, selling gewgaws and finery to the swain wherewith to woo and win the affections of his rustic Dulcinea, or, peradventure, making to many the present time happy by prophesying lustily of future happiness.

Now, however little it might have been suspected by

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the noble family of Borthwick at the time, a female of this tribe, and none other, was the kidnapper of fair little Lilian. Having been perambulating the country in quest of customers for her small wares, she chanced to be resting on a large stone under a chestnut-tree by the wayside, when the child, only three years old, came tottering out, in her glee, from the gate of the orchard. Such a prize had never before awakened the pilfering propensities of the gipsy-woman, the child being wrapped up in a scarlet mantle, lined with costly furs, and profusely covered with gold embroidery. As it were a bird drawn by fascination into the jaws of the snake, the heedless child made directly towards the spot where the woman sat. No one seemed to follow; and, gazing with a quick, heedful glance around, she perceived that no one was near; so, thoughtless of consequences, and without having time to reflect further than that a prize was within her power if she chose to take advantage of her good fortune, she snatched up the little creature in her arms, enveloped her in her ample duffle cloak, and away as fast as she could fly with her burthen to the nearest covert of the forest.

No doubt aware that the child was a scion of the proud tree of Borthwick, and that its abstraction might draw down, not only destruction on her own head, but involve the destinies of her whole tribe, it is scarcely to be supposed that the gipsy had any other object in view than to possess herself of the splendid mantle thrown around the child. So, after hurrying on for some little distance into the woods, yet not farther than that Lilian, if brought to the margin, might regain her way home, she endeavoured to undo the clasps which fastened the mantle, but, after repeated trials, found her efforts unavailing. It was only now that darker purposes flashed athwart the mind of the Egyptian; and, taking out a large knife from her pocket, she threatened instantly to imbrue her hands in the blood of the poor child if she did not promise to remain quiet. She tried and tried in vain, for numerous clasps were secured in a way she knew not to unrivet, and, her eastern

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nature enkindling to a degree of rage, while muttering some dark, mysterious curses, she almost resolved on taking away the life of the innocent; for the fastenings could not be cut asunder without materially deteriorating the value of her prize. But even in the darkest and most malignant heart there are some nooks accessible to the touches of nature,—some kindly speck in the blasted wilderness of the human bosom, with its singing bird, and its spring, and its palm-tree;—so, when Lilian cast up her bright blue eye, craving the mercy and compassion of the savage, the hard knots of her swarthy brow relaxed; the scintillations of her dark, flashing eyes abated; and, threatening the child on the peril of its life to make any outcry, she snatched her again up into her arms, and pursued her way to the hills through the by-paths of the forest.

III.

The summer sun was now high in heaven, and the gipsy was far on the road towards Kelso, though she kept carefully aloof from public observation by threading many "a bosky bourn and busky dell;" now making directly to some mountainous point among the Lammer-muir hills, and now winding circuitously around the far-scattered farmsteadings. Often from the top of rising grounds did she stop to listen, and to look back in the direction of Borthwick Castle; but neither sight nor sound conveyed to her a token of alarm or pursuit. Weary and worn out with her burden and her hurried journey, she came to a rivulet which gurgled pleasantly under some ash-trees, and here, seeing no trace of human habitation nearer than a village some two miles distant, she laid down Lilian on the grass that she might wash and refresh herself.

Fatigue, terror, and anxiety had so overcome the gentle child, that in a little she fell into a sound sleep, from which she did not awaken as the Egyptian conveyed her to the screen of a blaeberry bush; for the sun was fierce and scorching, and there was not a cloud

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on the face of the blue sky. Scarcely had she done this, when her ear was suddenly alarmed by the trampling of horses, and, climbing a little way up one of the trees, she perceived a party ascending the nearest brae. What could she do? To alarm the child was now too late, for in awaking it suddenly it was most likely that a sense of its situation might cause it to scream, and bring the horsemen directly upon her. To escape from the copse was impossible; and she immediately found that she had nothing for it but to provide for her own safety by creeping into a large hole in a sandbank half-hidden by the tangled branches of the sloe and bramble.

Scarcely had she got securely into her hiding-place when the riders approached. It was, however, none of the scouring parties of Lady de Borthwick, but the Lady Abbess of Coldinghame, who had been across the Frith of Forth conducting some sacerdotal business at Dunfermline, and was now on her homeward route, attended by three of the lay-brothers of the convent. Engaged in conversation, they had almost passed the copse, when the last of the train, beholding the scarlet tinge of the child's mantle under one of the bushes, reined up his horse, made a signal for the party to halt, and, dismounting, found little Lilian fast asleep. As no one was to be seen around, the abbess commanded the child to be carried forward along with them, promising that it should be carefully attended to until such traces might be discovered as might lead to its restoration.

Scotland was at that remote period divided into a great many almost distinct compartments, from the pernicious prevalence of the feudal system,—a system which rendered proximity of lordship an almost certain plea for discord and disturbance, hostile aggression, and hostile retaliation. On these accounts, there was little commerce or connexion between the baronies of Borthwick and Consland and those lying farther south; the districts skirting the sea having a more natural communication with the populous coast of Fifeshire; while the border counties formed a link of union among themselves to

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make incursions into the northern parts of England, or resist the predatory attacks of the powerful families of Scroope, Howard, and Percy.

Whatever might have been the cause—and probably this was the true one—the asylum of Lilian never was discovered; and she was suffered to grow up in the seclusion of the cloister, like a violet in the shade. All the knowledge and learning of the times were, however, duly propounded to her; for the abbess, to her credit be it spoken, took a pride in her young charge, who, when she had attained to her fifteenth year, was a perfect model of feminine beauty. To her external loveliness she added the endearing additions of a spirit the most affable and benign, a heart overflowing with feelings of sympathy, and a sensibility to the charms of external nature, illustrative of all that is excellent and generous. She looked on all living things as if she derived pleasure from the sight, and, by the charms of her temper and person, stole away the affections of all that looked on her.

About this time, Sir David Seaton, a young and valiant knight, arrived from East Lothian on some matter of business, and in his conversations with the lady abbess in the guest-hall was smitten with the loveliness of the fair foundling, who sat at work in one of the window-niches. The severe rules of the place forbade any formal introduction, and courtesy prevented his making those approaches which affection eagerly dictated to him; and Sir David departed without opportunity of exchanging a word with the beautiful stranger.

But the genius of true love is fruitful in inventions; and the business of the young knight's mission, it was soon found, could not be settled at a single interview; so in a short time, without more leave-asking than a beneficent glance from the bright blue eyes of Lilian, he ventured on breaking the ice of restraint between them. Circumstances paved the way for one another, subject introduced subject, and interview led to interview. Still, it may be sworn, that even the unworldly abbess herself began to suspect that mettle more attractive than the

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settlement of some trifling difference concerning the feu-tenure of some church lands led the young scion of Seaton such a frequent dance, though scarcely could she allow herself to suppose that the heir of a powerful and ancient family could honourably fix his affections on a foundling who had no escutcheon of nobility to boast of save that of nature in her fair face and fame.

In this, however, she mistook; for not only had Sir David Seaton placed his affections on the lovely, homeless Lilian, but he had secretly vowed within his own soul, in the fervour of youthful passion, that none other but she should share his house and heart. But a tremendous barrier opposed itself between them; for how was he to obtain the consent of his family and relations —proud of their rich blood and high pedigree—to his union with a girl who could not reckon ancestry back the length of her own parents? The jealousy of the lady abbess, kindled but too late, had by this time denied him access to the convent; but, as the old song goes, "True love will venture in where it dare not well be seen," and had before this established a channel of communication; so Lilian was the plighted mistress of the young lord of Seaton.

VI.

While the young knight and the fair Lilian were thus basking in the secret sunshine of their loves, it so happened that the Baron of Borthwick took up his abode at Winton House for a few days. Here he was nobly feasted and entertained by his host, who, having been left in early minority by the death of his father, had now attained to an age when he was deemed capable to take the management of his extensive estates; and it was on this occasion that, one evening after the wine-cup had circulated freely, the old lord, in recalling early times, spoke of his juvenile intimacy with the deceased Sir Hugh Seaton, and of many extraordinary rencounters which had mishapped between them. Among other things, he spoke of a famous deer-chase,

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in which several riders and a number of horses had lost their lives, and when, after all the dogs were done up, Sir Hugh held the buck by the anthers, till he himself despatched him with the whinyard. "But, my dear young friend," he said, "there is a story, that above all concerns you. Perhaps you may not be aware of the paction entered into, on our words of honour, that our families should be united, provided the one possessed a son and the other a daughter?"

It may easily be supposed the effect which this disclosure had on the heart of the young knight, for never, till that moment, had he been made aware of the existence of such an agreement; and he knew too well the character of old Lord de Borthwick to conceive him capable of jesting on such a subject. He was completely overtaken unawares, and at a loss what to think; for however rash he might deem his parent for having become a party to such an unnatural agreement, yet did he hold his memory in such reverence, as to reckon any act of disobedience on his own part not only unallowable, but sacrilegious. Then rose the form of fair Lilian to the eye of his mind; and he was tossed in a sea of troubles. Could he think of abandoning one so beautiful in form, and so pure in heart; whose affections he had wooed, and won; and who was willing to leave all, and follow his fortunes! He wist not what to think, for well he knew, that, backed by the whole host of his relations, Lord de Borthwick would call upon him to redeem the pledge which had been sacredly given. So when, next morning, he bade farewell to the party of the old baron, at the gate facing towards his town of Ormiston, he shook him cordially by the hand, saying, "Would to Heaven your discovery of yesterday had been made to me somewhat earlier, my lord; nevertheless I shall endeavour in all things to conduct myself as becometh a real and spotless knight; and, as in all things I have been solicitous to follow the dictations of him who hath gone to a better world, so far as honourably in me lies, his will in this matter also shall not be forgotten."

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Chafed in his mind, and depressed in spirit, finding it impossible to reconcile this contest between honour and duty that now followed, it is easier to imagine than describe the state into which the gallant young knight was thrown. A few restless days and almost phrensied nights passed over him, and driven to the verge of despair, he at length determined to unbosom himself to Lilian, and abide by her decision, whatever that might be. On the one hand, he was called upon to ratify the paction of a father whom he tenderly loved in life; whose memory he revered, and whose wishes commanded his most implicit regard; but to verify the old adage about "the course of true love," &c. these wishes could not be fulfilled without doing violence to his most deeply-cherished feelings, and injustice to her who had exchanged vows of mutual affection, and whose loveliness and virtue tended so greatly to enhance the magnitude of the sacrifice.

No sooner, however, was the noble-hearted Lilian made aware of what had been disclosed, than she heroically forestalled him in his application; and whatever the resolution might have cost her, she bore up against the threatened troubles, and suffered not her sorrows to appear. She wrote to him a long epistle, conjuring him, by the sincerity of the love he had once professed, to cherish hope no longer—to forget that such a being as herself existed, and faithfully to obey the sacred duty he owed to the memory of his beloved parent. "In me," she added, "you might have found an humble follower of your fortunes, but not such a wife as the high blood of Seaton calls for, and your merits claim. Think not of it—think not of me one moment longer. Unless you consider my nature to be as base as my origin is obscure—unless you wish me to believe that Sir David Seaton can prefer his own selfish gratifications to the high and holy commands ratified by the honour of a parent, and entailed on him as a sacred duty to obey, you will see me no longer, nor venture to delude mine ear or your own heart with vain sophisms. The die is cast. Farewell for ever! let our next meeting

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be in heaven. While I live, my prayers for your welfare and happiness shall duly ascend; and when I die, I shall—'tis the only earthly recompense I demand,—I shall expect that you shed a single tear into my closing grave.

"For the last time, farewell, farewell! and remember this, that had you not been true to the injunctions of your father, you never could have been true to me. Should you consider my poor loss as at all a sacrifice, console yourself with the truth that filial piety demanded it. Secure from the tumults of the vain world, my days—and may they be few!—will glide over in peace, and, from thoughts dedicated to Heaven, the only earthly claim will be my constant prayer that Sir David Seaton and the wife of his bosom be happy and prosperous!"

Terrible was the struggle between love and duty in the bosom of our hero; and had the extremest danger that ever mortal heroism encountered been sufficient to have given him a chance of extricating himself from his difficulty, most gladly would he have encountered the peril. But, on the one side lay his heart and his vow; on the other side an obligation, which his holiest feelings shamed him to regard. The dead could not arise to cancel this command; but the living had heroically left him, not only free, but had strenuously urged its fulfilment. What could he do? After allowing his heart to be almost rent asunder, he at length submitted to the solicitations of his relatives,—and, may it be added, of his still too dear Lilian; conscious of the awful sacrifice she was making for his sake, in voluntarily devoting her blooming years to a heartless nunnery; and that, in ratifying his father's paction, he was sacrificing all his chances of earthly happiness, by uniting himself to a woman he had scarcely ever beheld.

V.

It is a hard thing to go a-wooing against the will, and to make those lip-professions which the heart has little share in. But circumstances reduced young Sir

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David Seaton to this dilemma; and after having paid formally due court to Margery the elder daughter of the house of Borthwick, marriage matters were soon arranged, the bridal-day appointed, and magnificent preparations made for celebrating the union of two such powerful families. Could credit be attached to traditional report, such a display of grandeur and magnificence had seldom been witnessed in this country: many of the nobility, with suitable attendance, convening together in honour of the joyous festival, from remote quarters; lord, lady, waiting-page, guard, and squire of low degree, bedizened out in all the gorgeous extravagance of the times, with gold on gown and doublet, down even to the bits of their bridle-reins and the housings of their saddles. So that for some days anterior to the expected ceremony, arrival after arrival caused the halls of Borthwick to overflow, and added to the cheer of wine and wassail.

On the arrival of the cavalcade in attendance on the bridegroom, the whole party sat down to a grand dejuné, in which, according to the fashion of the times, more substantial viands were mingled with rich wines, delicious fruits, confections, and lighter articles of fare; and remained at board till near midday, the appointed hour of the marriage-ceremony, which was to be performed in the chapel of the castle by the holy abbot of Seaton, who had accompanied his relative and patron.

Attended by the ladies of the party, Lady de Borthwick had previously to this retired, to observe that every thing had been fittingly ordered, and to exhibit her magnificent arrangements. The admiration of all was, however, particularly elicited on surveying the decorations and furnitures of the bridal chamber. The walls were gorgeously covered with the finest arras tapestry, and the floors were carpeted with stuffs of the most superb Turkish manufacture. Censers, full of the most rare exotics, distributed their incense around; and the hangings of the couch were purple satin, looped up with tasselage of gold. In short, nothing could be added, even in fancy, to the superb magnificence of the

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place, which resembled more the enchanted bower of an oriental tale than a habitation destined to be occupied by two beings inhaling the breath of frail mortality. So the maidens and waiting-women who stood lining the passages as old Lady Jemima and her train passed along, expecting praise for this tasteful exertion of their handiwork, and, peradventure, largess from her guests, were not baffled in their expectations: but, in a few moments, a wild scream summoned the whole posse to attendance on their mistress.

And what, it will immediately be asked, caused this so sudden alarm of the old lady? It was this:—on pulling aside the silken curtains of the couch, to display an embroidered coverlet, in which her maternal pride especially delighted, she beheld, spread over it, the identical bandekine, or eastern mantle, which was around the shoulders of her little Lilian, when she had disappeared for ever! She could not mistake it, for its peer was scarcely to be found within the three Lothians; having been brought from Constantinople by a Jewish merchant, on order of Queen Margaret, by whom it was presented to Lady de Borthwick, as a birth-gift, at the baptism of her younger daughter. Externally it was of the finest scarlet velvet, starred over with gems and gold; and, on the inside, lined with furs of the rarest.

Alarmed at this sudden and inexplicable indisposition of their hostess, the ladies crowded around her, and supported her from sinking on the floor, by bearing her away to a seat.

"What is the matter, what is the matter?" eagerly inquired they all, as they hung around her, unlacing her boddice, and throwing open the casements for fresh air.

"The mantle, the mantle!" was all she was able to exclaim; and then fainted away.

"It was I," said a stranger, stepping forth from the band of maidens, and putting aside the white veil in which her head and shoulders were shrouded. "Oh, heavens! what have I done. In my simple way, I

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intended a peace-offering, and, lo! I have brought anguish." The eyes of the whole group were instantly turned upon her. Never had any one beheld a countenance more radiantly beautiful—and no one had ever seen it before.

Lilian had always known that her fate was wrapped in darkness, but she had long given up the hope that the mystery of her origin was ever to be developed. She was now, however, as one on whom a meteor-light flashes at midnight; and she felt as if the moment had arrived when the riddle was likely to be solved. But let us turn a little back, and account for the unexpected appearance of the fair foundling at this time and place.

VI.

Nature is above all; and, though its dictates may be stifled, they can never be eradicated, for in them we live, and move, and have our being. Lilian was doomed to acquiesce in the truth of this apothegm, when, in the solitude of the convent she heard of the day fixed for the union of the houses of Borthwick and Seaton. In the enthusiasm of her passion, she had reckoned on having nobly subdued all selfish considerations, and triumphed in the resolution which had taught her to sacrifice the chances of her own happiness at the shrine of the man she loved. Though yet but on the verge of womanhood, with a sunshining world beckoning to enjoyment, she had acquired fortitude enough to let herself be shut out from its pleasures; "but surely," thought she to herself, "now when I know that to him I am as I had never been—that the marriage-day is fixed, and the heart and hand of Sir David Seaton devoted to another—it may be allowed me for a moment to look on the happiness I cannot share, and call a silent blessing down on the heads of the bridegroom and his bride." When the heart is willing to be led, slender is the sophism that will convince it; and, satisfied with the purity and innocence of her motives, the seemingly stoical, but in sad truth disconsolate,

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Lilian secretly bade adieu to the walls of Coldinghame-convent; and by such a bribe to the handmaidens of Borthwick as her slender means admitted, she gained access as an assistant in the preparations for the marriage-ceremony. She had arrived on the evening before; and when, on the morning of the bridal, the last finishing was given to the gorgeous chamber, she lingered for a moment behind the rest, and, dashing aside a hasty tear, spread out above the coverlet her magnificent childish mantle—'twas all on earth she had to give—and departed.

All that she now lingered for was a parting-glance at the happy pair before she shut out the world and its feelings from her for ever; when the accident happened which led to this digression.

"It was I," said Lilian, stepping modestly forward, almost trembling at the notice she had drawn upon herself, and at the turbulence of emotion she had excited without knowing how.

"And, in Heaven's name, who art thou?" asked Lady de Borthwick, recovering from her swoon, as she anxiously rose from her chair, and came forward to scrutinize her features. "It must be—it must be she," she exclaimed. "I see—feel—know it all. The same bright flaxen hair, the same bright blue eyes, the straight nose, and the small mouth of the line of De Borthwick. It is—it is my own, my dear long-lost Lilian!" and with these words, in an agony of parental tenderness, she rushed forward, and threw her arms around her neck, as she clasped her to her bosom.

The news spread like wildfire through the castle, and all were electrified to hear that, in one of the bower-maidens, Lady de Borthwick had discovered her long-lost child. It was no time for ceremonials, and there was a general rush of exultation towards the bridal chamber; nor among the last was Sir David Seaton, from whose cheek the sunshine even of a bridal-day had been scarcely sufficient to drive the clouds.

"Where is she—where is my affianced sister?" said

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he, as he made his way through the crowd. Lilias was at the moment standing with her back towards the entrance-door, and the tones of his voice thrilled through every nerve, making her feel as if she could have shrunk into the earth with agitation and delight; but as Sir David stepped forward to embrace her, she turned half round, lifted up her eyes, and her look indicated what could not be expressed.

Ancient romancers would have called in some mysterious operation of the laws of nature to assist the lovers on such an occasion; but if, like Niobe of old, Sir David was not actually metamorphosed into a statue, it may of a verity be declared that he looked like one. He stood absorbed in amazement—his brain whirled round, and all about him seemed but the phantasma of a perplexing dream. At length, heaving a deep sigh, and leaning his brow on his hand,—

"Ah! Lilias, Lilias," he said, "how unworthy am I of thy regard or commiseration. Thou hast rescued me from a gulf of perdition and disgrace! Had my regard to honour been as pure as thy affection has been devoted, less had been my compunction and self-abasement at this hour. As it is, for the regard I bear, and have borne to thee, I will live single, or wed none other. I have tarnished the fair name of Seaton, and will leave this land for ever!"

If the astonishment of the group had been formerly great, it was now carried to an inexplicable pitch; for not only was the acquaintance of Sir David Seaton with the fair stranger acknowledged, but his love for her also made manifest. How matters should terminate was not quite so plain.

"Not so fast," exclaimed Sir Gregory de Murray, when Sir David had made an end of speaking; "Heaven orders all for the best, though man is oftimes so froward in thwarting its purposes; and, in this matter, let us acknowledge the interposition of a particular providence. I trust the occasion will prove one of unmingled enjoyment to all; and that those who have been long united in heart shall now in hand be

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also united. But let us adjourn from this scene of confusion to the hall."

When all the party were arranged round Sir Gregory de Murray in the hall, he continued his address. He said, that "with all respect to the living and the dead, he could not but consider the affiancing of children, yet unborn, as at best unnatural, even though dictated by the best and purest motives; as, though hands might be in their power to bestow, it did not follow that they could transfer hearts along with them."

"My Lord and Lady de Borthwick," he added, turning to and addressing them, "when, after wooing the affections of your fair daughter Margery, I sued for her hand, your courteous answer informed me, that had not this obstacle stood in the way of our alliance, none other could have possibly obstructed it. Luckily, it is now in our power to rectify such an unfortunate mistake. That obstacle is now to be removed. Though, wo 's me, my fair cousin hath come forward to-day decked out as the bride of another, I can forgive, nay, admire this exertion of filial duty; and if still I hold respect in the eyes of my once plighted, and still too dear, fair friend—"

"Nay, hold, more than enough, my gallant knight," said old Lord de Borthwick; "I have felt deeply, trust me, the injustice of depriving you of your lady-love, and my daughter of the object of her choice. But the long-plighted vow—the long-plighted vow—how could I get over it? Thanks be to Heaven, that has not only afforded a remedy, but that in the restoration of my long-lost child. Margery, come forth, my sweetest, and acknowledge if you are dissatisfied with the change." Margery was handed forth, but a deep blush was her only answer, and not an ineloquent one.

Sir David Seaton then gallantly stepped forward, and taking hold of her hand, placed it within that of Sir Gregory de Murray. "I have been the unfortunate, though, I assure you, unsuspecting cause of impeding a union which I pray Heaven to bless. To you, Sir Gregory, I relinquish all claims—I resign the hand, and the heart something tells me you have already won."

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The abbot of Seaton was now summoned in to proceed with, what he had no expectations of, a double ceremonial, which he confessed seemed brought about as by an especial interposition of Providence.

"Thanks, holy father," said Sir David, "for your kind good-will." Then, turning towards Lady de Borthwick, he added, "But, my Lady de Borthwick, I fear you will reckon me cruel. You have but now recovered a long-lost child, and I would, even on the instant, deprive you of her. What says mine own injured Lilian?"

Lilian said nothing, but casting her eyes on the ground, let silence tell all that was necessary.

At the altar of the little chapel stood a double pair; and over the shoulders of Lilian her mother threw the scarlet mantle, which was destined to have exercised such remarkable powers over her fortune, saying,—

"With that scarlet mantle I lost a daughter, and now—"

Sir David Seaton concluded the sentence by adding,—

"By that same scarlet mantle I have won a bride."

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THE

DEER-STALKERS OF GLENSKIACH.

A HIGHLAND LEGEND.

BY ANDREW PICKEN.

CHAPTER I.

The red roe bounds swift through the wilds of Braemar;
The war-cry sounds sharp from the crags of Glenshee;
But where nature blooms sweetest, the heart may break soonest,
But Love's tales are aye saddest in vales like Strathden.—*Scraps.*

About the middle of the seventeenth century, before civil improvement had penetrated into the fastnesses of the north, the Highlands of Scotland were in all respects in that wild state from which constantly arose circumstances and incidents that are at least very different from the common routine of modern life. Feudal clanship was still in its vigour. To the lawless tribes of the Scottish mountains and forests, life was a mixture of romance and barbarism, of enthusiastic devotion to their adored chiefs, and of liberty as perfect as that of the noble savage himself, who roams the wilds at will, and gratifies his love or his vengeance by his own dexterity or the strength of his arm.

And yet, as is well known, Highlanders have to this day a tinge of melancholy in their characters. Nature is often grand and impressive around them; but the impression, though deep, and poetical from its wildness, is generally cheerless in its solemnity, and bleak and rugged in its very grandeur. The inconstant sky of

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these foggy regions adds often a darker gloom to the effect of the bold scenery of their mountains, and to the impressive stillness of their sweeping flats of red heath; but when the sun *does* shine with summer clearness upon their romantic hills, and opens out the mysteries of their green glens,—when his cheering beams become reflected from their glorious lochs and their still waters in the hollows, the heart of the roving Highlander leaps with joy, and he thinks his own country the most charming on earth.

Much of the Scottish scenery, beneath its mountains, consists, even to this day, of a picturesque mixture of scattered woodlands, rocky hills, and green glades, which still bear the general name of forests, although considerably changed since the times of which we write, by being denuded of the national fir or pine-trees, of which these woods were chiefly composed. The forests of Athol and of Glenmore, of Abernethy and Braemar, have long been celebrated as the great fastnesses of the Highlands, where, in times of public strife, domestic feud, or unsuccessful rebellion, the hardy Celts of the hill could set at defiance all search as well as all regular warlike attack. It is with the last of these, namely, the ancient forest of Braemar, that our simple tale has chiefly to do.

The great Mar-forest, now maintaining little of its former character, situated in the middle of Aberdeenshire, and extending some forty miles along the banks of the Scottish Dee, is sufficiently diversified in its interior scenery and surface to afford excellent shelter and concealment for all who chose to lead a lawless life within its bosom, or whom crime or misfortune had driven from their homes, and from circumstances more akin to comfort and civilization. At the time we speak of, it belonged to John, the eighth Earl of Mar,* and, like other Scottish forests in the neighbourhood, was well stocked with game of various sorts, now compara-

* For several of the particulars on which this tale is founded the author is indebted to the talented Ettrick Shepherd, the indefatigable collector of Scottish traditions, and a worthy coadjutor of our club.

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tively scarce in the Highlands; particularly with the well-known red deer of the north, that, browsing on the sweet herbage of its dells and coires, bounded in multitudes among its ancient oaks, its dark Scots firs, and its tangled brushwood. The hunting of the deer, the dun wolf, the badger, and the boar was, from the remotest period, as is well known, a favourite diversion of the Highland chieftains, and indeed of all Scotsmen, from the king downwards.

But poaching being an ancient amusement as well as legitimate hunting, it was not to be supposed that the fat bucks who ran wild in these woods should not prove a great temptation to ruined lairds and other inferior gentlemen, who never had much to boast of save their ancient lineage, and to sundry other hungry Highlanders, who, from various causes, were driven into a sort of exile in the heart of their own country. Accordingly, in these days there were not wanting numbers of brave fellows who loved the free air of the forest, and delighted exceedingly in game and venison; and who, possessing a quick eye, and a strong arm for drawing a bow, contrived to live at free quarters in the woods of Braemar and Athol, chiefly upon the savoury food which they hunted by day, or such other godsends as their reiver skill and their good claymores might procure them by night.

Although this forest had, from time immemorial, afforded an asylum and support to certain marauders, blackmail men, and deer-stalkers; and although it was the owner's conviction that, to his own foresters, such gentry would always form part of the game to be hunted in his woods, yet some accounts that he had heard concerning their number and audacity, about the time our story commences, induced him to give special heed to the subject, and try to prevent his good red deer from being more common to the use of others than to himself or his people. At this time there lived with him in the castle of Braemar a youth, named Alaster Graham, or, as he was frequently called, Alaster the Bassenach, from his having been brought up in the Low-

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lands; and to him the earl determined to intrust the care of checking the constant incursions on his interesting live-stock in the woods.

This youth had already made himself remarkable for uncommon strength, as well as for the perfect fearlessness with which he undertook enterprises and performed feats, which even to the hardy Highlanders of these glens seemed quite wonderful. Taller than common, the person of Alaster was yet exceedingly well-formed, and built with athletic firmness; and his superiority in the usual martial exercises of the time soon procured him a high place in the respect of the other retainers of the earl. Being often employed, not only in deer-hunting with his patron or kinsman, but in making inroads upon the reivers that burrowed in the heart of the wood, he had established a sort of outpost in a cave which was very peculiarly situated, and was accessible only by a single and secret pass, from which he gave the deer-stalkers great and constant annoyance.

It soon came to be understood that some relationship subsisted between Alaster and the earl, but what that relationship precisely was never was certainly known. Some said he was his illegitimate son, the consequence of a youthful amour with a fair cousin of the present countess, who bore the name of Graham; others said no; but so it was, that the earl had a great favour for him, and appointed him a sort of ranger of his immense forests. Nothing could be more to the taste of Alaster than this office; for hunting the fox and pursuing the red deer were both his delight; and the very squabbles and contentions with the poaching marauders who infested the wood contributed to the romantic excitement of his employment, and afforded many opportunities for exhibiting that personal prowess for which he had become famous far and near.

In those days, however, personal strength and undaunted courage were no rarity any where, least of all were they scarce among the wild freebooters of the Scottish forests; and there was in particular an excluded covey of the Gordons that had established itself

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within the recesses of the great wood of Braemar, which consisted of men as remarkable for their desperate courage and strength as for the lawless life they were accustomed to lead. Among these, their chieftain, Grumach Gordon, though now beyond middle age, was a man well fitted to lead a band of broken men who were often engaged in fierce encounters with similar marauders, and whose broad claymores seldom were suffered long to remain inactive on the thighs of the wearers.

It so happened that Alaster Graham had never for a long period been able to fall in with any number of these Gordons; nor would he believe either in the plenty in which they were reported to live, nor the strength and courage which he had often heard most provokingly attributed to old Grumach their chief, or the bold and brave John of Leask, his rough and undauntable kinsman. One day, however, strolling on foot deep into the recesses of the forest, accompanied only by his man Farquhar, Alaster came unexpectedly upon the indications of human habitations. Pursuing their tract, the wanderers soon perceived a pleasant opening, beyond which, at the head of the glen, was ranged a snug congregation of habitations which made a sort of baille, or hamlet in the wood; and from the wattled chimneys of which rose, at the moment, such volumes of smoke as showed pretty clearly that the people within neither wanted warmth nor food. A savoury scent of the well-known venison came temptingly over the senses of the hungry travellers, as, late in the day, they came upon this woodland-den of the Gordons; and Alaster soon found that he had more than one appetite to gratify before he was likely to leave this comfortable spot.

"Where are you going, maister? and what are you behooving to do?" said Farquhar, his gilly or servant; "surely ye're not gaun into the vera tod's hole wi' your een wide open?"

"Would you have me to shirk like a Lowlander, from a gang of deer-stealers," said Alaster, "while I

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have a claymore on my hip? Pooh, Farquhar! If you're fear'd, man, go back to the old rock aboon the burn, or to the chimney-cheek o' the Mar Castle; but as for me, since I've come so far, faith I'll have a tussle wi' the greedy Gordons o' the wood—Humph! what a fine smell of venison!—Devil do them good o't!"

"Lord's sake, maister, dinna gang straight into the lion's den," replied the gilly, holding the other by the plaid; "if ye do ye'll ne'er get another sight o' the tappy turrets o' the auld castles of Kildrummyor Braemar, an' I'll never get another waimfu' o' steev brochan at the laird's ha'; haud back, maister!—there's life an' death on't."

"I'll just see first what's inside of that braw bigging that reeks like a killogie," said the bold young forest-ranger, striding forward. In another instant he had opened the low door of the rude building, and the two found themselves at once in a warm and roomy apartment.

"*Kimerhashen*—there's fouth and routh here," said Alaster, as he drew himself up to his length on getting within the dwelling, and looking up saw the ceiling of the house thickly hung with red-deer hams; while the smell of the savoury mess which was cooking in a large pot that hung over the fire had a particular temptation in it. Nor less so was the sight of a quantity of dried malt at the farther end of the house, which was in preparation for brewing, and mayhap for distilling the peculiar beverage of the hardy Highlanders. A good-looking woman stood by the fire, paying due attention to the potful of venison-stew, which sent forth so pleasing an odour through the sheiling; and three or four bare-houghed Highlanders lounged near the fire, or scoured their weapons at the farther window. They all seemed startled by the entrance of the strangers, but the men only looked darkly at each other without offering any other than a very slight civility; while the good woman, dropping her ladle and a Highland courtesy at the same time, politely offered Alaster Graham a three-legged stool on which to rest himself, until she might learn the

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errand which had brought so buirdly a young fellow to the dwelling.

A mutual glance between the men and our hero showed him in an instant that some of them knew him, and declining the low seat offered by the cailach, he determined, by some brief observation, at once to decide the nature of his reception. Casting his eye upwards again at the tiers of brown hams above him, the sight of which both galled his pride of place and reproached his vigilance, he said, with a mixture of defiance and sarcasm, "By my faith, lads, ye know where the Earl of Mar's deer bounds, and can bring down a buck with arrow and bow, without giving yourself the trouble to inquire to whom it belongs. 'Tis well you can fare thus in the wood."

"Hoigh! the fare's weel enough," said one of the men, saucily; "but the horned-beasts that brattle through the forest dinna run in at the idle man's door; an' the black moor-cock that whirrs o'er the brake disna flee into the kail-pat of its own accord. But to whatever fare we has in the wilds o' Mar the stranger is welcome that comes as a friend."

"As to friend or foe," answered Graham, with fearless rashness, "that must depend on the account you can give of how or where the venison has been obtained, which makes this woodland hovel a store of greater plenty than the braid kitchen of the Earl of Mar's castle. I eat not stolen meat, nor do I even bend my houghs to sit in the company of katerin knaves. Whence came all this venison?"

"Oigh, oigh, Mr. Sassenach!" answered the Highlander, coolly; "whenever ye can tell a stag's horn frae a steer's stump, an' a Highland shentleman wi' a claymore to keep off the braggarts frae the laird's loon that disna ken how to speak civility when he goes a roving through the woods among better men, I'll answer the query—but not till then."

The brawny Gael had scarcely got these words out of his mouth, when Alaster, regardless of all consequences, took two strides up to the speaker, and seizing

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him by the throat, commanded him, in a tone of authority which struck the others with astonishment, instantly to inform him explicitly how he had obtained the store of venison that he saw around him.

The Highlander, who was no other than the John Gordon, usually called John of Leask, of whom our bold youth had often heard, not doubting that the imperious intruder had a strong party without who waited to second the quarrel that he seemed to be raising, thought fit for the present to lower his tone, and civilly informing the stranger that he was not the master there, assured him that the inquiry would soon be answered to his satisfaction.

The house in which Alaster and these persons now were was a large barn-shaped building, which served for a sort of hall or place of public meeting and entertainment for the marauders of the forest as well as a general storehouse for their provision, and a distillery for the manufacture of the aqua, with which they occasionally regaled themselves in no very stinted measure. While the foregoing altercation was proceeding, one of the men had stepped out under cover of the smoke of the large fire which burned near the farther end, to apprize their leader, Grumach Gordon, of what was going forward. Hastily buckling on his broadsword, the veteran chief rushed into the barn or rural hall of his people, and was absolutely petrified with astonishment on perceiving a single youth of little more than nineteen with a strong grasp collaring his kinsman, while the hardy John of Leask seemed to quail before him.

"Gad a-mercy! what's this? a pig man—that's but a gilly—thrappling at the throat of John o' Leask? Aff hands! Got tamn! A young whelp frae the dugs will think to worry an old stag!"

"Tell me, if you are master, who kidnapped the red deer whose houghs and hams are ranged in scores over our heads?" demanded Alaster, throwing the man he had held by the collar from him.

"Phugh-ooh! is that it?" said old Gordon, disdainfully. "I'll tell you what it is, young man, I've shot a

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dear, before the priest made the holy cross on your brazen brow, when ye were a squalling brat an' a plague to your minnie; an' I'll eat the wholesome venison of the forest when ye are supping sour crowdy at the far end of some puir laird's table: so dinna come here to speer saucy questions at the clan of the Gordons; for better men than you hae gotten an answer in cauld steel, that made a sad hole in their stomachs. Therefore just take an auld man's hint, an' dinna put your finger in the tod's mouth when he's angry!"

"Do you refuse to give any explanation to me, sir?" cried Alaster, "who demand it in the name of the Earl of Mar himself, the noble owner of this forest, in which you have taken up your residence unbidden, and without paying kane or coin for the favourable shelter of these boughs and beilds! Do you refuse to answer where you obtain this store of venison? or to promise to quit with your followers this wood? Answer me!"

"Go to a paper court at Dun-eiden* and seek for answers to such questions," said the old marander, doggedly; "but don't think to come into a Highland forest and speer the catechism at honest deer-stalkers wi' swords by their sides. And as for the Earl of Mar, if he grudges a red buck now and then to Highland shentlemen, living civilly in the wood, tell him from me, that Grumach Gordon and his men will neither answer buff nor sty to his backspeerings, an' that I care not a doit for him or his beardless messengers."

"Who are you, old fellow," said Alaster, scarcely able to refrain from springing like a tiger on the reiver chief, "that dares to speak thus to the noble Earl of Mar, and to me his relative and representative? By the hilt of this sword, that is ready to leap out of its scabbard, you and your thievish clan shall pay for this day's insult!"

"For God's sake, master, have a care what you say," whispered Farquhar, his trusty gilly, in the youth's ear. "Remember we are only two, and see how these

* Edinburgh.

wild Gordons crowd around and grin defiance upon us, perceiving that we are entirely in their power."

"I demand again a civil message and a repentant promise to the Earl of Mar, before I stir from this spot," vociferated Alaster, with the recklessness of an undaunted spirit, and paying no attention to the prudent warning of his servant.

"Kill the saucy Sassenach!" shouted several voices, for the whole company of the Gordons had by this time crowded into the house, and already stood eager for a fray.

"By the soul of my father, you are not likely to stir far from the spot, young man, if you beard us thus!" cried the old chieftain, drawing his broadsword; "and as for the Earl of Mar, your kinsman, or your master, I am a shentleman born, sir, as well as you or he, an' Grumach Gordon has as good plood in his veins as either of you; an' I defy you, and the earl, and all your clan! since you provoke me;—for the Gordons o' the Mar-wood will never ran like wild does frae the Sassenachs o' the valleys: now hear ye that, young man!"

"Then since you've sworn," said Alaster, stepping forward fiercely, "I swear too, by the black crag of Glen-dearg that bounds this forest, that whenever we next meet beyond the stones of Sharnock, where the deer browses on the slopes of Cairntoul, the whizzing bullet from the long guns of my clan, or the broad arrow that never misses its aim, shall drink the blood of the wild thieves of the wood: hear ye that, old man!"

"Ye shall never see that day, nor the morn's light, since ye *will* beard the fox in his ain den," said Grumach Gordon, gnashing his teeth with rage, as he clenched his sword; and in two minutes after the two adversaries, followed by the crowd of the threatening Gordons, were without on the sod and preparing for the combat. It was in vain that the cool and experienced Farquhar attempted to dissuade his master from fighting such a cock as Grumach upon his own dunghill; by the reasonable representation, that if he even slew the stalker chief, both their lives should pay for it in an

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instant after, by the fury of his enraged men, who now, as well as the women of the hamlet, crowded round to witness the strife. Meantime, when the wives and daughters of the forest-reivers observed the tall figure and fine form of so mere a youth as Alaster was, as he stood up to fight their chief, some apprehension was entertained for their own leader; and not a little anxiety was in the minds of some, lest the uncertain fortune of bloody strife should cause so fine a fellow perhaps to be carried out of the forest a mangled corpse.

But the fury of the chieftain could now suffer no restraint, and the courage of Alaster would suffer as little question; so, to it they went, while the shouts and yells of the anxious Gordons, in encouragement of their champion, made the scene almost hideous, particularly to poor Farquhar, who stood by, holding his master's plaid, and his long fusee, with a look of dogged despair; foreseeing, with melancholy conviction, that whatever way the combat should end, this was the last day that either was likely to have to live.

A very few moments served to decide the combat. Alaster evidently kept on the defensive, while the older man, trusting more to strength than swordmanship, and being too much enraged to fight warily, was soon spent: so that with an ease, a self-command, and a degree of strength that was imputed by the superstitious spectators to nothing else than witchcraft, the young man, first wounding and then disarming his adversary, laid the proud reiver chieftain sprawling at his feet.

The enraged men who had been spectators, now, as Farquhar had foreseen, rushed in upon Alaster; and John of Leask, getting behind him, first threw a long plaid round his body, and then, with the assistance of others, bound him with cords, and parting him from his reluctant gilly, who in vain attempted resistance, they dragged the youth thus strongly bound into a small hovel, and throwing him down upon a heap of fern, left him with an emphatic intimation that he had not long to live, but that Grumach Gordon was the man who should pronounce his doom.

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CHAPTER II.

In a low and narrow outhouse, but built, or rather enclosed, partly in the recumbent rock in an angle of the glen, lay Alaster Graham, bound as he was, and rested for a time in perfect tranquillity of mind; for, as for death, come when it might, he thought little of it—and, in short, such was his nature that any sort of fear regarding himself was a sensation to which he was perfectly a stranger. The tightened cords, however, that bound his arms and limbs began to render him exceedingly uneasy, and, die or live, another sensation added to his pain, which was no other than the common gnawing of hunger, but which, in a healthy youth, who had eaten nothing since gray morning, now began to be extremely intense and troublesome.

"They cannot mean to leave me here to perish by starvation!" murmured the poor fellow to himself as he lay and swallowed down the water that rushed into his mouth, as the savoury smell of game and venison was occasionally wafted across his sense by the wind that whistled through the crevices of the hovel.

"Shall I call aloud for food?" he continued, as he listened to the tread of the sentinel placed over him, who paced slowly backwards and forwards without. "No," he added bitterly, and making a strong effort to ease his arms, "though I now see clearly their meaning; but I shall die first, after my heart has been eaten out of my breast with the pinching of gaunt starvation. Oh! if I were only free of these cursed bonds, the mother that bore me should never have to lament that her bold son, who so imprudently trusted himself among these wild Ishmaelites, should die like a dog for want of a morsel of meat."

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Night now began to darken down, and still the unfortunate youth heard nothing but the measured step of his Celtic sentinel, the faint hum of distant voices in the baille, and the low whistling of the mountain wind, which came in irregular breezes through the surrounding openings of the forest. Hunger and exhaustion are provocatives of sleep, and imaginative melancholy brings on fantastic visions of indefinite troubles. But dreary woods and haggard phantoms in the shape of strange forest-spirits, their heads adorned with the antlers of the deer,—which first seemed to crowd around him with threatening aspect,—at length gave way, in the changes of his dream, to beauteous nymphs with soft voices and yellow hair streaming in the breeze—next a table covered with linen, whiter than the snow on Benlawers, seemed to be spread out under the tangled branches of the wood, and smoking dishes of savoury venison, offered by smiling maidens, presented a banquet that a king might envy. Still he seemed to struggle in vain to get free of his bonds that he might partake thereof. Anon he thought he felt the cords and thongs gently unswathing from around him, and the bands of sleep or of his pleasing dream gradually were removed from his excited imagination; until feeling sensibly soft fingers touching his cramped arms, he opened his eyelids, and perceived a female form bending over him, her long locks of yellow hair touching his neck, and her warm breath almost moistening his cheek, as with gentle earnestness she busied herself unravelling the cords which bound him so closely.

For a moment he could not recollect where he was; but the spitting light from a small rush lamp that had been placed on one of the projecting stones which composed the rugged walls of the hovel showed him its shape and brought his situation to his memory, while his sense was saluted by the tempting odour of a dish of game that also smoked near him, and the form of the female, imperfectly seen by the dim light of the cruisy, showed him the angel hand which his dream had represented as providing a banquet for him in this wilder-

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ness—and which was awaking him from his deep sleep, by giving him freedom from his bonds. The female shrunk modestly from Alaster, when she saw him open his eyes, and retiring, and then fetching forward the mess of venison, she looked kindly in his face as he sat up, and in a low voice, and in soft liquid Gaelic, bade him eat and be silent.

It was not until the hungry youth had swallowed a few mouthfuls of that food, which to one in his circumstances was more valuable than pearls, that his ardent appetite allowed him time to look that gratitude in the face of the Highland maiden which he had neither words nor leisure to express. The girl smiled archly as she observed his healthy youthful voracity, but she seemed to watch, with the keen ear of a greyhound, for any sound that might give indication of interruption to her hazardous enterprise.

"Who are you, bonnie lass, that I dreamed of in my sleep, and that comes to me in the wood and in the dark night with viands more grateful than handfuls of gold; and with looks almost as sweet to the sad and the foredoomed as the kisses that seem to hang so temptingly on thy lips? Speak again," added the youth, as he paused in his repast, "that I may know that my dream is indeed gone, and that through thy means I am again awake to life and to liberty."

"Eat your meat, kind sir, and drink your drink," was the polite speech of the Highland maiden, as she brought forth a goodly cup filled with the forest liquor, —"and then I will speak all that I dare, and more mayhap—hush! this beverage has strength in it, and you may need it. Now, cut these other thongs that bind your limbs, and I will take nothing for your freedom and your life which I have come to save at the hazard of my own, but your word, your simple promise, and the token of your troth, that you will spare, as you can, the deer-hunters of the forest; and above all, that you will protect, instead of seeking, the life of my passionate father, Grumach Gordon."

"And is it really so, pretty maiden?" said Alaster,

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gazing upon her with astonishment and admiration; for warlike exercises and woodland sports had hitherto so absorbed his attention that he had scarcely ever till now looked fairly upon the face of a woman. "It is a hard condition thou imposest upon me, and freedom itself should not purchase my consent to it, but tha. *thou* art interested, sweet girl,—but I will keep it for thy sake—here is my token; but what is thy name, maiden, that I may know thee as the prettiest wood-nymph that haunts the forest of Mar?"

"My name is Moina, sir:—alas! what a fate was to have been yours this night, but I saw how well you fought to-day, though it was with my own father; I saw you a stranger in the midst of the wild exiles of the forest, and I determined to save you—hist!—no, 'tis no one—now, are you ready?"

"I am," said Alaster, springing up; "but what fate was to have been mine? Tell me, sweet Moina, from what you have saved me."

"From death in the dark, without the brave man's recompense, and from a deep grave in the covert of the wood, where the warrior never plants his firm foot, nor sheds his tear for the fallen. There is a small party of the clan of Macrabin that lurks among the rocks near the edge of the glen,—they have been sent for, sir, and are to come here in the dead of the night, intending to be thy secret executioners."

"And where, for heaven's sake, is my glaiked gilly, Farquhar?"

Moina only shook her head with a look of sad meaning, and then said earnestly, "Haste! haste! the lamp burns low, and the time wears apace—and if you do not get round the hill before the night-wind rises, these bloodhounds will scent you out. But you will mind your promise, Alaster? alas! and yet you are rashness itself."

"Fear not, my sweet Moina, there is my token," he said, taking from the goatskin purse or sporan which hung before him a small pocket-piece; "it is old gold, and it is thin worn—but you are my deliverer—my

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guardian-angel of the wood; shall we break the coin between us, as lovers do?"

"I shall not say nay to your offered troth, brave youth," she answered modestly, but looking up anxiously in his face; and they broke the piece of gold between them:—"it is at least," she added, "for my father's sake."

"*This* must be for mine then, Moina," he said, throwing one arm in customary gallantry round her neck, and stooping his face close to that of the Highland maiden; "nay, be not unreasonably coy at such a moment as this;" she trembled in his ardent grasp. "God bless thee, my deliverer! thy lips are sweeter than the blaebernies of the bank, and warmer than—".

"Hush!—now, set forth by this opening; be sure you keep the hill on your left, and your eye on the north star, when you can see it through among the trees, until you get to the great stone of Glendurig, and then you will know your own way. Blessings on you, youth! and safety."

She watched the tall figure of Alaster as he moved down the path between her and the starry sky; then passing softly the Highland sentinel, who was still sound asleep by the hovel from the drink she had given him, Moina slipped quietly back to her little dormitory in the hamlet.

CHAPTER III.

Scarcely had Moina Gordon laid her head upon the low pillow of her chamber,—if the small apartment allotted to her deserves this name,—and before sleep had visited her eyelids, when ruminating upon the events of the day, while her heart palpitated as she thought of the manly form and ardent words, at parting, of Alaster Graham, her fancy wandered after him

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in the path she had directed him through the wood; until something shot across her recollection, at length, that made her sit up in her bed, in the alarm of the moment.

"Where was my silly memory?" she said to herself, almost in agony, "that I should have forgotten to warn him of these wild scouts. Should he fall in with Black Cell, or any of his men? but that surely cannot be; besides, his gallant courage—alas! what do I say about a stranger, and my father's enemy. Hark! there are the stealthy footsteps of those who were to have been his murderers—I have at least saved him from their bloody hands, and he is now hastening his way down Glenskiach, free as the breeze that blows from Ben-aven, and strong as the oaks of Braemar." Having said this, with all a maiden's feelings over the first fancy of her heart, she kissed the broken piece of gold given her in token of more than her father's safety, and sinking on her pillow composed herself to sleep.

Meanwhile, every object that could be seen by the bright starlight passed rapidly from the view of the vigorous traveller as he strode hastily down the glen, or strath, that, undulating in occasional irregularity of surface, and broken by clumps of stunted birch-trees, or spread out in patches of heath and grassy herbage, stretched towards the hill of Breriach, beyond the Mar forest and the Dee. An elevated and thick part of the wood skirting the strath or holm behind him, which he never before had passed,—the part of the country in which he found himself being entirely new to Alaster,—and a bend of the river leaving a wild and rocky height between him and the northern sky, while heavy clouds began to obscure what little starlight he had,—our midnight traveller became exceedingly puzzled to find his way. As the clumps of wood thickened round him, and the ground on which he trod became more irregular and boggy, he began to lose all certainty whether he ought to turn to the right-hand or to the left; or whether, in going forward as his fancy led him in the dark, he was not returning back to the ground over

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which he had already passed. He stopped once or twice, and looked carefully round him for some point or object in the dark landscape on which his eye might rest; but, well as he was accustomed to night-adventures, he could make out no guide from the indefinite masses of trees or indistinct shapes of hills which surrounded him; and as for the guiding-star of the north, above him, he looked upwards for her in vain.

"I have often seen the broad face of the moon looking pryingly down upon me and my men, when I did not want her officious illumination," he said, somewhat surlily to himself; "but she'll be sure not to show her bluff face to-night, when a glimmer of light might be a benefit to a lonesome wanderer travelling in the night-watch, glad of his life. 'Twould be nothing strange if I should, after wearying myself to death in this wilderness, find myself again in the heart of the dangerous baille of Glenskiach. Where on earth am I going?"

Youthful need and the chill night-breeze again began to overcome the vigour of the disprized wanderer, and the drowsy sensations of the soldier, on his midnight march almost overpowered him with sleep. It was small hardship to Alaster to make his couch of the heath among which he was plodding in the dark; and the first knoll that his drowsy eyes could detect in the obscurity became his resting-place. The situation, however, into which chance had thrown him, was more favourable for a look-out over the dim landscape than for safe concealment; and the habits of suspicion of a Highland leader's life in those days had made watchfulness almost a second nature to Alaster, so that although he indulged a little drowsiness as he rested, his hearing and even smelling senses remained in sensitive readiness for any alarm.

Casting his half-shut eyes, ever and anon as he sat, towards that part of the night horizon which was most open, and had the greatest share of the dull starlight, he thought he could perceive something moving which could not be single trees or any brushwood clump; for though almost asleep he had a shrewd suspicion that

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been did not travel even by night. He looked more eagerly, and then laid his ear to the ground, when he soon could plainly distinguish the short brisk motion of the Highland trot along the mossy earth, while the single figures of a company of men could, next after, be seen along the level, their heads bobbing up and down by their peculiar movement, between him and the sky.

"There is something ado in Glenakiach this night," he said to himself, as he rose hastily and adjusted the broadsword that still hung at his belt. "I'll see what it is if I should lose a drop of red blood for my pains," —and so saying he strode on towards the higher part of the glen, towards which the night-party seemed hastily moving.

Before he could get near them, however, the strange men, who seemed to trot along nearly in Indian file, had entered a pass between the brushwood and the rocks, where it was only by the acuteness of his hearing that Alaster, who dared not enter the same track, was able to follow them. Determined, however, to make himself acquainted with the meaning of this night-march, anxiety and curiosity, with a natural love of adventure, soon drove off his drowsy feeling; and before the party again emerged forth into cleared ground, Alaster had got before it, and was gradually drawing nearer to ascertain, if possible, who were the men, and what was their purpose. "By the priest's mass and the prior's book!" he muttered as he drew close upon the party, "there's death in that silence, and doom to some wretch in that measured tramp, for I see they have a bound prisoner." A light flashed across his mind, leading him to conclude that these must be the Macrabins with his man Farquhar, whose life they were going to take when they got him beyond the haunts of the Gordons, or whom, in fetching thus far from his own people, they meant to tempt into treachery by an offer of mercy.

Various conjectures of this kind passed through his thoughts as he still strode forward, sometimes

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chasm by his side, and at other times in the rear of the party. He now began to know where he was as the Highlandmen ascended to higher ground, for he heard the roar of running waters, and soon perceived the irregular windings of the Dee beneath him on the right, as those whom he watched seemed to be approaching its banks. Still they mounted as they drew near the river, and now the anxiety of Alaster became intense, as to what the party meant to do, for it was very evident the men had no intention of crossing the Dee, nor was it likely they should proceed much farther, as they were evidently going out of the straight tract formerly pursued. Suddenly the whole stopped when they came to the brow of a lofty bank, below which, at the distance of about a hundred and twenty feet of precipice, the dark waters of the Dee ran deep and black, scarcely reflecting a single star, which now appeared in the dull sky of the early morning.

The stout heart of the hardy youth began now almost to sicken on witnessing this; for a deed of blood seemed to him evidently in the contemplation of this nightband, and that in a form to which fair death on the battle-field must be a joy and a boon. With some difficulty he was enabled to draw near to observe the result, and at the same time avoid discovering himself, but the effort required all his skill, from the exposed situation on which the whole now stood. After various attempts to approach them by creeping on his hands and knees, he in a few minutes succeeded, by getting under the brow of the precipice which overhung the river; and scrambling among the short broom and rocks of this dangerous situation, he cautiously planted himself almost under the halted party.

When he put up his head over the bank, he could see that the whole consisted of ten men, and one bound and unarmed; eight of them standing in rank a little back from the brow of the precipice; while two of them, apart, and nearer to the place of his concealment, seemed occupied in interrogating the prisoner.

"So ye'll pe determined to pe dumb, an' dogged,

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to pe sure!" said a tall man with a cock's feather in his bonnet (the Highland badge of a gentleman) to the terrified prisoner, and the speaker Alaster instantly knew by his voice to be John of Leask; "an' ye'll ra her drink a dead man's bellyfu' o' the black waters o' the Dee, than tell us who cut the thongs an' the hemp frae Alaster Graham this night?"

"I cannot tell though I would—that's God's truth," said poor Farquhar, appalled at the prospect before him—"and I would not though I could," he added, with Highland resolution.

The two Celtic leaders looked at each other in momentary uncertainty, as they stepped two paces aside: "By my soul there's naething else but witchery an' glaumory in it;" said the other, in the superstitious spirit of the times; "Grumach Gordon aye said, that nothing but warlock spells could save that rash Sassenach callant—what shall we do?"

"Do! what would ye do, after coming all this way," said John of Leask with dark ferocity, "but put a stane in his plaid, an' gie him the prisoner's douk in the black linn below. He'll ne'er rise again like a mermaid out of the cauld waters, to tell the Earl of Mar where the red deer smokes in the Gordons' pot, or where Alaster Graham was unbound by the witches—but hist! ay if he'll show us the secret pass to the gray cove where the Mar's men meet—life is sweet, and the bottom o' the Dee is a cauld bed."

The two went back to their wretched prisoner, and put to him another question or two, in words which our concealed hero could not distinctly hear, but evidently in vain; upon which, making a sign to the body of the men, they all came forward, and with strange cruelty proceeded to unloose his arms in preparing him for death, while they began to tie the plaid and a stone, fetched by one of them, round the doomed man's neck.

While all this was going on, Alaster was more occupied with a feeling of uncontrollable vengeance than such horror as might have been expected from witnessing such a scene, and as usual, the recklessness of con-

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acious valour to which all fear was a stranger prevented him from exercising that prudence which would have been resorted to by less daring spirits.

"You will not speak the word then?" said John of Leask, dragging the unfortunate man forward to the edge: "see you—there's grim Death with his dart watching for you at the deep bottom of that crag; and you may already hear, if your ears are good, the water-kelpies of the flood singing your death-song to the night-wind. If you have father or mother to greet for you when ye're dead, better join the Gordons an' the Macrabins o' the wood, than sleep at the bottom o' the cauld waters o' the Dee."

"I've neither father nor mother to greet for me," said the poor fellow, "nor wife nor sister that loves me, but my braw young master Alaster Graham, an' he disna know the pass I am brought to this dismal night; to be drowned like a dog under the cloud of darkness. Oh, if he were here now!" and in the weakness of nature and the dread of his doom, a tear started into the eyes of the faithful Highlander, while he wrung his hands as he looked over the horrid precipice, beneath where he stood among the group of his executioners.

A shrill whistle, sounding from under the brow of the crag, startled the party with apprehension, at the moment they were lifting up Farquhar to throw him over into the linn; and in another instant after, Alaster, with his drawn broadsword in his hand, had sprung into the midst of the astonished Highlanders. Well did the doomed Farquhar know the figure and sword-hand of his master; the instant clash of swords aroused him to free himself from the entanglement of his plaid, and soon the fall of one of the foremost of the party, under Alaster's arm, enabled him to possess himself of a weapon, and to join this strange and unequal contest.

The party had given way on the first onset of Alaster, conceiving, as by his preliminary whistle he intended they should, that there was a number more in ambush ready to join him; but in a few moments, seeing none other, they all began to press

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hard upon the two combatants, who, in spite of the most valorous efforts, were gradually driven back towards the edge of the precipice. Alaster now saw, as he often had before, the dangerous effects of rashly trusting to valour alone, and his imprudence in not at least taking up his position at first where the party should have been between himself and the river. It was however now too late, for the Highlandmen soon drove him and his single companion to the very edge, and as Alaster at last fought on the defensive only, against such numbers, although he had laid two dead at his feet, while struggling to protect himself from five or six swords, he saw poor Farquhar driven over the edge by one of them, for both fell together down the precipice, and in another instant, after some struggling and rustling among the brushwood of the steep bank, he heard a heavy plunge, as of one falling into the deep waters of the linn below. Making now a sudden and desperate effort, he grasped the foremost man with whom he was engaged, and dragged him with him down the fearful steep. Here his great strength became the means of his own safety, for, disengaging himself from the gripe of his antagonist as they rolled down the steep, he was enabled, by clinging to the short broom that grew among the crags, to arrest his progress; and as he hung, he heard first one and then another succeeding plunge into the dull waters far below him.

The wild shout of the deer-stalkers above him struck upon his ears with an appalling sensation, as he hung over the precipice and clung to the broom with desperate efforts, and their still wilder lament over two of their companions who had been drowned in the Dee, besides the two whom his own sword had deprived of life above the bank; but he thought sadly of his poor servant, who in spite of all his efforts seemed to have met his death beneath the black waters that now murmured softly far beneath him. He heard John of Leask and his men shortly after withdraw from the scene of this unfortunate conflict, bearing away the bodies of their two companions; and soon finding the coast clear,

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by great exertion, and with danger as imminent as he had yet encountered, he at length succeeded in again gaining safe footing on the summit of the precipice. Creeping under the brushwood that grew near the height, Alaster again laid himself down on the fragrant heath, and composing himself as well as he could, after so many troubles, he slept soundly until the sun had risen some height above the bald brow of the romantic summit of Lochra-gur.

CHAPTER IV.

"There can be no doubt but it was witchery and glaumory that loosed the cords of Alaster the Sassenach last night," was the cry among the Highland women in the forest-hamlet, or baille of Glenskiach, on the morning after the foregoing transactions, as they mourned over the bodies of those that had been slain. "and the powers of darkness," said they in their song, "and the powers o' the air, and the wild spirits o' the wood, and the greengown fairies o' the brakes, that dance in the moonlight, and sing madrigals to the north star—that ken whaure the storm is brewing behint Ben-aw, or whaure the ships are to be sunk in the bay o' Dornoch; an' lay down their little ears to the sounding earth, and listen to the dead man's groan—an' laugh at the gurgle in his throat, as he drowns beneath the wave—it was they loosened the thongs frae the Sassenach's feet, an' threw glaumor o'er the sight o' Donald Gordon that watched at the door, an' saw nane enter, and nobody go out; and yet the prisoner was gane and his bands with him, and appeared at the brow o' the black rock aboon the Dee, an' fought wi' the strength o' seven devils, an' killed our brave hunter lads, and drowned them in the linn below—ochon! ochon! ochon—aree!"—And thus the wild lamenta-

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tion rose and sounded through the woody valley of Glenskiach.

But a very different sound was heard in the great hall of the castle of Braemar, upon the return of Alaster Graham, with the news of his adventure, and of the sad fate of his servant Farquhar. "We'll scour the woods of these greedy Gordons," was the universal cry, "until not a man of them shall remain, from the crags of Glenvioch to the water o' Dee; and the wild Macrabins shall be rooted from the land, from Ben-aw to Balmorral, and chased through the Mar-forest, like the bounding deer that flies before the shaft of the marksman—giving his flesh to the hungry hunter, and his branching antlers for a trophy of success."

All was therefore bustle and preparation at the castle of Braemar, and thirty stout Highlanders of different clans, were soon selected and appointed by the earl himself under the command of Alaster, to take vengeance on the marauding reivers of the forest. "I have borne with these thievish deer-stalkers too long," said the earl, in a private interview with the youthful commander of the party, "and particularly with that veteran knave, Grumach Gordon. Root out him and his marauders from the heart of the forest, and if they resist, as they are likely to do, spare him and his as little as they do the red stag of the wood:—dost thou hesitate?"

"No, my lord," said Alaster; "but the Gordons are an ancient and a noble clan, and spread far and wide over Scotland's glens and valleys; and Grumach is—"

"An old villain! that dares me to the teeth!" interrupted the earl, angrily. "Harkee, young man—rid me of that forest plague, or look me not in the face again. What! Thou wert not wont to blench at a drop of red blood, Alaster! Remember, thou art the ranger of my good forest, and I know thou canst slice the head off a Highland reiver, as deftly as I can cut down a prickly thistle. Go!—thou knowest my thought."

The youth bowed himself respectfully before the earl

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and departed; but as he went, the golden token that he wore upon his breast felt as if it would turn its sharp edge into his own flesh, and the blue eyes of Moina Gordon seemed to beam on him, and to plead for mercy for father and for mother, in language which shot through every nerve of his frame. But he and his Highlanders were soon on the march, and as they moved along over moor and dale, and breathed the fresh breeze that swept down the heath from the cliffs of Cairntoul, the bold spirit of his men and the excitement of the expedition were so delightful, that trusting to circumstances and his own strong arm for the ultimate safety of his principal foe, he entered briskly the precincts of the forest of Mar, thinking less of war than of love, and less of the great object of his enterprise than of the yellow locks of Moina Gordon.

A forest has, from time immemorial, been a favourite spot with chroniclers and taletellers, as the scene of all sorts of romantic adventures; but the great forests of Germany or of eastern France, the lofty pine-woods of the Pyrenees or the Alps, or the thick and venerable masses of vegetation that afforded shelter for the military robbers on the banks of the Rhine, are very different from that wild mixture of low woodland, heath, and steep crag, green patches of herbage on which the deer browses, and black and dangerous bogs and marshes which constitute the wilderness tract called a Highland forest. But though less magnificent and awful than the great German woods, or the lofty and endless forests of North America, these natural wildernesses of the Highlands of Scotland present a variety of feature, and a romance of effect and of situation, which has peculiar charms for the free rover of these wilds, and is the delight of the imaginative Celt of the north.

The party had not penetrated far into the wood, when the sight of the deer bounding through the passes, and rushing in crowds along the open glades of the wilderness, with the occasional whirr of the game which started in coveys at their feet, stirred up the spirits of Alaster's followers for the chase, and instantly changed

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for a time all thoughts of the slogan of strife into the gay and cheerful halloo of the hunter.

Away they all soon went, therefore, in scattered groups among the bushes, for a powerful Highland hunger having by this time entered their stomachs, from the effects of the morning's march, no effort of their youthful commander could restrain the eagerness of his men, stimulated as they were by so many potent excitements. But few guns being at this time possessed by the inhabitants of these northern regions, the bow and arrow were chiefly used for wounding at a distance, and the shafts that flew in every quarter around them as they rejoiced in the sport, soon provided the party with ample and substantial seasoning to the small portions of oatmeal which each man carried in a bag slung behind him.

The forest now rang with the shouts of the new deer-hunters, which became fainter to each group as they receded from each other, and became hidden in the entangling intricacies of the wood. The delight of the hunt soon proved as seducing to Alaster as it was to the most eager of his comrades; and cautious prudence being no part of his character, he, in the eagerness of the chase, lost all command of his men, and even knowledge where most of them were; three or four followers only being ultimately within sight, who made any answer to such calls as he now thought it safe to make in this part of the forest. A noble buck, upon which he had fixed his eyes, having taken a direction separate from the others, he and those immediately near him were led to pursue it down an irregular bank beside a small stream, which wound its way through an open part of the wood, in order to get a fair shot at it; but it being no easy matter to follow such an animal "by speed of foot," Alaster was ultimately far parted from the main body, and deeply entangled in the depths of the wilderness.

By the time, therefore, that the buck fell under the shafts of its eager followers, and the small group were proceeding to carry it away from the spot, the triumph

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of Alaster was not a little damped, on perceiving that he could form no idea of the direction which he now ought to take, and that the shrill sounds of his whistle were only answered by the echoes that reverberated from the deep solitudes of the wood.

"Come along, Colin," he said at length to the follower who since Farquhar's death, had become his favourite, "lay the beast on thy shoulders, and let us turn up this bank: when we come to the higher and more open part of the wood, no doubt my thoughtless coarnachs will soon reply to the call of my whistle."

The little company of four persons vigorously set forth and mounted the bank, the wild solitude echoing to their tread, and the rising autumnal breeze beginning to sweep with rustling freshness through the openings in the forest. But still no sign of living creature appeared, for the red deer themselves had been frightened off by the shouts of the whole party, the gray fox dared not to howl until night spread in indistinct darkness over the fastnesses of the forest, and Alaster now began to hesitate, whether he would continue to mount to the highest ground near, for the chance of recovering his men, or whether, by returning to the stream below, and following its course, he should simply try to ascertain his position in the wood. After consulting for a few moments with his men, he soon determined, as usual, on the bolder course, and perceiving a track which led to an open spot on his right, he pursued it steadily, notwithstanding the weariness of his followers, convinced that he was drawing near to the very innermost recesses of these wilds.

"Deevil a leg can we lift mair," grumbled one of his men to his neighbour, that their leader might hear him; "besides, what is the use o' this Lowlander's march, without a crowdy in the wame, or a snuff in the nose, when we're famish'd wi' the starve, an' no a pan to make a broth o' the beastie?" he added, looking ruefully to the dead buck under which the hindmost man began to waddle with weary discontent. "Just lay her

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down, Colin, my lad, and tell the young dumuasal, she'll no gang a foot farther."

The man did not require a second hint to turn dogged, so throwing the buck with a bound on the sod, he refused to trudge another step, unless, as he said, "Master Alaster would let him comfort himself with a slice or two off the hurdies of the venison beast, whilk was needful now for their refreshment;" besides, as the man argued, it being much easier for gentlemen hunters to carry their food in the place appropriated for it, than for each man to bear it on his neck like a Lowland flesher.

The perils of the place and the consequences of his own thoughtlessness began to be perceived by the youthful leader, thus separated from the body of his men and obliged to take up his quarters at the close of the day in a part of the forest unknown to him, and where his few followers were every instant liable to be surrounded and cut off by the bold deer-stalkers, Gordons and Macrabins and all, who were intimate with every pass and turning within the bosom of the wood. "If we must stop and rest," he said, looking round him, and seeing the necessity of giving way to circumstances, "it shall not be here; we must not, in this expedition skulk like cravens in the glen, for however small our numbers, I will never play any other than a bold game. See you, lads, yonder bushy rock that raises its tufted head like a black feather in the heart of the wood?—let us up to the top of the crags, and kindle our fire and roast our buck. It will be a candle to light the steps of our own men to find us; for we shall raise a flame in the midst of the forest that shall be seen even from the turrets of old Braemar."

"Lord-sake, Maister Alaster," said an old Highlander, "ye'll no mean to light up a low here amang the trees, just to show the wild Gordons, an' a' other reivers, frae Inverey to Abersnithak, that here we are, four puir chields, that'll no be a mouthful to thae wor ricows o' the wud"

"Huisht, huisht, Donald!" said the youth familiarly,

"I know it's ill speaking to a Highlandman with an empty stomach, but wait till you and I get a picking off the ribs of that dead venison, and a thow o' heat from a cheerful bleeze before us, and I'll warrant we'll be able to look down frae the tap o' that crag on Grumach Gordon himsel an' a' his men. Up, lads! 'mount an' go,' as the Sassenach sang says.

Up the four mounted to the top of the craggy hill, and flint and steel being a part of their travelling equipment, in a few minutes the crackling fire began to cheer the weatherbeaten faces of the Highlandmen, who smiled grimly with pleasure as they saw the smoke and blaze arise above the woods, while, like other travellers in the desert, they roasted collops cut off the venison, on the nearest embers, with which, ever and anon, they stayed their hunger. Besides this, they were not even without a drop of the clear dew, so specially a distillation of the mountains of the north, which one of them supplied, with little ceremony in the application, from the mouth-piece of a good-sized bullock's horn, that was slung beneath the small sheepskin bag under his arm, and which latter held also a modicum of oaten meal, both being the constant companions, if possible, of a Highlandman's journey.

"Faith, lads, this same is a comfort an' a consolation after our day's wark," said Colin Macrone to his two neighbours, as they sat gazing in the cheerful blaze of the fire.

"What wark?" said the third jeeringly; "I wonder what gude we've done for the auld earl this day, wandering here in the woods just like what I've heard Mass John tell o' auld Dauvit, the king o' the Chews, or Nebechudneighbour, that was banished to the fields, an took up his quarters wi' the prute peasts, for want o' a decent lodgings. So here are we in the enemy's land, cocked up on the tap o' a coggly crag, just for a mark to be shot at like a cappercuilzie, wi' the long arrows of thae crafty Gordons. Faith, lads, ye've picked your last bane, an' drank your last toothfu', I'm thinking;" and in illustration of his grumbling remark,

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this learned Highlander took his last tug at a spaul of the venison which he held, and then threw the bone angrily into the fire.

"See you how gloriously the flame mounts and illuminates the dark foliage of the forest, from Braemar to Glenskiach?" said Alaster with admiration, as he watched the effects of their fire on the reddened objects around. "The remainder of our lads cannot be far off, and they must obey this signal beacon-light;—but rest you, my men, and I will watch;—for from this point, while our fire blazes, I can see the very birds as they go to their soft nests on the branches beneath us, and the cautious badger could not look out of his hole near but I should know it."

"Young callants are aye confident," whispered the wise Highlander, with a Gaelic "humph!" through his nose; a sound that was exceedingly expressive to his approving companions—but as Highland shentlemen, of that day in particular, were nowise disturbed at the idea of losing their lives "the night afore the morn," as they were wont to express it, taking their chance as usual, all now round the fire, excepting their leader, laid themselves down to sleep without the slightest anxiety.

It needs no Highland seer to tell, that the confidence natural to youth and a brave spirit, while it is sometimes the cause of surprising success, is by the ordinary operation of things much oftener the occasion of sad disaster. The foundation of it in Alaster on this occasion could not be expected to last long in any vigour, for overcoming sleep *will* deprive the sharpest eyes of their keenness, and the brightest blaze of light to assist the sight in darkness will die away, unless fed with materials not obtained without trouble even in a Highland wood. Accordingly the comfortable indolence occasioned by the heat of the fire soon had the effect of dulling the exertion necessary to keep it in vigour; and as the flame before him began to get low, and the surrounding objects to become lost in the obscurity, the increasing difficulty of keeping his look-

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out with any intensity, caused the drowsy leader to seek for excuses for relaxing in his watchfulness until he fairly began to nod at his post.

"Since the rest of my men have not made their appearance," he said to himself, "we must each take our turn at this weary watch;" and then he shook by the shoulders each of the three who now snored beside him; but for the present that was a vain endeavour, for the philosophic mountaineers, having previously made up their minds to die or live just as Providence might order it, seemed determined to give themselves no trouble, particularly during sleep, whether they were to rise again with their lives, or "pe killed the hight like shentlemans."

As a few brands still continued to crackle dimly on the fire, the near objects on the summit of the crag began to assume all shapes to the half-closed eyes of the watcher; the bushes and rocks became reddish black and brownish gray in their grotesque indistinctness; and the dark outline of the surrounding forest which he overlooked appeared almost to unite with the dull starlight of the heavy midnight sky. Sometimes the weary watcher thought he heard the birds below as if whispering to each other among the bushes, and again he thought the red deer seemed to be clambering up the crag to obtain a heat from his fire; but he imagined at times that they almost had the faces of men, and appeared to nod with plumed heads instead of antlers of horn, as if the four-footed creatures were making signs to each other.

Suddenly, as he gazed around in his watch, one of the short stumps of trees below on the crag began evidently to move, which greatly surprised him; and as he opened wider his eyes to observe this phenomenon, the sprouting branches remaining on the object began to look, the upper one first, exceedingly like the cock's feather on the front of a Highland gentleman's bonnet, and then the branches below to resemble the end of a bow and the feathery heads of arrows. Next after something like a nose projected from near the top, as

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the stump evidently moved upwards, and two shining things on each side began, like glowworms, or like human eyes, to reflect the bedimmed light of the fire.

The drowsy watcher, as he sat, was puzzling his dreamy reason to account for so remarkable an occurrence, when suddenly he found himself seized on behind, evidently in the clutch of a wild beast, while half a dozen more stumps appeared to rise up from among the bushes around, and in another instant a shout was set up from the bottom of the crag, so hoarse and wild that it half-stunned, half-awaked him into startled recollection, for in it he recognised the cathghairm or war-cry of the clan of the Gordons, which bounded up in a shout from the heart of the forest, while himself and his little party were surrounded by nearly twenty persons, and at once taken prisoners without a blow. A strong arm held him fast in its gripe behind, while another bound a cord around him; and as, finding it useless to resist, he cast his eyes round upon the face that, as one was tying his arms, grinned with a triumphant laugh upon him, he recognised, by the faint glare of the fire, the strongly marked features of old Grumach Gordon.

"Hagh!—agh!—she has her noo!" exclaimed the veteran deer-stalker, chuckling with joy as he pulled the cords round the body of the astonished youth. "If the Sassenach callant doesna mend her manners noo, she'll ne'er see the auld castle o' Braemar ony more."

"Is that the chance ye give a brave man for his life? to bind his arms for fear he should harm you, and take his sword because you dare not meet it," said Alaster, scowling in scorn on his adversary.

"We dinna feght incarnate deevils, an' witchcraft, an' glaumory," said the chieftain knowingly; "the Gordons dinna deal wi' the horned-ane, or kindle fires under the cloud of night, and mutter spells in the dark wood; but ye shall have your sword, young man, in broad daylight, for I have my revenge to take out of you before you leave the baille o' Glenskiach. Forward, my lads, wi' your prisoners!"

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The four reluctant captives (for the other three of Alaster's party had been bound almost in their sleep) were led or rather dragged down the steep of the crag, at the bottom of which they were met by a number more of the Gordons and Macrabins, who placing them in the centre with another grin of satisfaction, the whole began to march forward in silence through the wood.

"Are ye leeving yet, or are ye dead, Donald?" said Colin Macrone to his nearest neighbour, as they rustled their way through the bushes; "bite your finger, man, an' try if ye be dreaming or waking."

"How can I bite my finger," said the other sulkily, "when I canna put up a claw to scratch my ain head when it itches? not having the use o' my arms, as ye see, but left to stoitre through the wood in the dark, and trussed up wi' a tow, just like moor-hen for the spit—teevil take it!"

"Hoogh! ye'll be hang't the morn, Donald, so never heed," rejoined his neighbour, consolingly; "but mayhe they'll do us the pleasure to shoot us wi' poother an' lead. Oh! but that would be a pleasant an' a shentlemanly death, lads; but it's o'er gude for the likes o' us."

"It was a God's mercy that we got sic a meal o' the venison, lads," said the third, in a low voice; "the collops were sae sweet when bristled in the fire last night. It's a meeserable uncomfortable thing to be hanged wi' a hungry belly."

"Oigh! mayhe we'll no be just hang't this time," said Colin, gayly—"see you how proudly Maister Alaster walks, though he's girded round like a sauted ham?—odd, if I could only get my right hand up to pick my lug, or my twa fingers in my mouth to gie the reiver's whistle, I would try whether there's aught in the wood but wild cats an' badgers. I say, lads—whisper."

"What is't?" said the others; "huisht—they'll hear us."

"Let us all three set up a skraigh—"

"What for, Colin? eh? Lord, they'll murder us."

"Deevil may care! better to be murdered decently at night, than to be hang't the morn's morning. Set up a skraigh, I say, that may be heard to the very gates o' Braemar. There's some gude 'll come o't—here goes, all at once—hoo-uigh!"

The screech with which the three Highlanders most unexpectedly disturbed the dead silence of the night almost startled the very leaves on the trees, and roused the birds in their nests, as it echoed away in the dells of the forest. Darkness itself seemed for a moment to give way to the sound, and strange noises to arise in the distance, which might indeed be the rustling of the red deer or some other prowlers of the wood.

"The Lord pe near us! Got tamn!—what's that?" exclaimed old Grumach Gordon, and several others on the instant, as they stopped short in astonishment at the shout, "that's witchery an' glaumery again—kill the Mars-men, kill them at once!"

"Hoo-uigh!"—shouted the Highlanders, a second time, in which the leader, taking their hint, now heartily joined, while the Gordons for an instant were perfectly paralyzed; and before the echo had died away in the distant hollows of the wood, a rustling was heard on the left of the party, figures appeared to start out among the trees, and in another instant the partial silence was again disturbed by a broken and somewhat running shout, set up at no great distance, as if meant for an answer to the random screech of the Mars-men.

The Gordons appeared now to be in utter confusion, not knowing which way to turn, or whether to attack or defend themselves from the unseen enemy, if enemy it were—or whether to turn their swords upon their shouting prisoners, who seemed patiently to wait the issue of their strange experiment. A figure or two began to draw near. "Huragh for Braemar! and down with the reivers of the wood!" shouted Alaster, starting forth from the side of Grumach Gordon.

"Braemar! Braemar!" shouted also the strangers, who could not now be mistaken—and in a few mo-

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ments a rush of them came close upon the position of the terrified Gordons.

"Braemar! Braemar!" answered in return the three prisoners in the centre of the party; taking advantage of the confusion, and rushing in a body against those who guarded them, they, without a stroke being aimed at them, succeeded in forcing a passage towards their own party, who now began to fit shafts to their bowstrings, and prepare for a general combat in the dark.

The Mars-men, however, afraid of killing any of their own, rushed in among the Gordons sword in hand. The clashing of their weapons now sounded through the wood; the deer-reivers gave way every where, uncertain of the number of their assailants, and hardly able even to distinguish each other, while the whole skirmish was rather an unmanly confusion than a creditable strife.

"Hold off, my men! come hither, and leave this disgraceful skirmishing, now as we are none of us longer prisoners," shouted Alaster; "the Mars-men do not willingly meet their enemies in the dark, and if Grumach Gordon will leave me and my three comrades the claymores that they took from us when they surprised us on the crag, we shall meet again in broad day, when I shall deliver to him the Earl of Mar's pleasure, with good-will to fight if that be necessary, but with better to spare the drawing of blood."

"I scorn to keep the arms of those who seem more in league with the black Devil than with the Earl of Mar himself," said Grumach, throwing down the sword of Alaster on the sod; "but blood only, if it can be spilt fairly on the field, shall satisfy the mind and avenge the affronts put upon me—Grumach Gordon. And so, young man, I bid thee heartily defiance. Come, lads, the Gordons will yet have their day with these men."

Thus saying, the old reiver led off his men, while Alaster and his followers soon again stretched themselves on the dryest part of the bank: here the whole

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rested on their arms till the clear light of day shone down between the trees, and showed to the first who were awake the beauty of several open copses in the surrounding forest.

CHAPTER V.

The morning was somewhat advanced ere the Highland party in the wood could rouse themselves from the heavy slumbers that succeeded all the toilsome adventures of the previous day and night, and considerably farther ere the men were in readiness to resume their march towards the habitations of the reivers in Glenskiach. The ground on which they had slept for some hours, though soft, was damp and cold; the limbs of the sleepers when they wakened were stiff, and ached with fatigue; the autumnal morning was raw and chill, and the Farquharsons and M'Crones, of whom the party was chiefly composed, stretched themselves and rubbed their benumbed arms and legs, as they looked around them in the silent and solitary forest, and curled their noses in each other's faces with true Highland sulkiness and discontent. Not a fire was yet lighted to cheer them; for the green smoking wood, round which a few of them gathered, would not burn; the tall Scotch firs, under the prickly foliage of which they had lain, excluded the faint beams of the morning sun from the gloomy spot where they were crowded together; and the distant openings in the thick forest only served to let in upon the party a snell stream of mountain wind, which had completely parted with its caloric as it passed over the snowy summits of Ben-nevis and Benaw.

"It's tamn'd meeserable this!" said Colin M'Crone to his neighbour; the ludicrous curl which drew up his nose as he spoke, elevating also the drop which hung

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at the point of it. "My houghs are caulder than my haunds, and my haunds are caulder than my hurdies," he added, essaying to rub his bare knees, which the kilt he wore was not intended to cover, with his red fists, which never had known a glove; "Donald! shake the scarrag anoth your oxter, an' see if there be a drap o' the bluid o' barley left."

"Teevil a drap," growled Donald, shaking the empty flask. "An' the very snuff is frozen in the mull! Tamn the Gordons an' the Macrabins! I tell'd you, Colin, that we're waur aff here in the wud, than auld Nepechudneighbour, when he gaed to live wi' the prute peasts—I'm saying, lads—"

"What is't ye'll say noo?" was the other's reply.

"She'll be a bad cheneral—that Alaster, I'm thinking," continued Donald, "to pring us into sic a place as this wi' naething but cauld an' hunger; an' us made prisoners at our ain fireside last night, without a stroke o' the claymore for the honour o' Braemar; an' to be march'd through the wud wi' a rope about her middle, an' her haunds tied behint her back like a veal calf, —cot tamn!—It's not like the usage o' a shentlemans."

"What'll she mean to do then?" inquired the other; his Highland suspicion also roused. "Will she turn her back an' gae hame?"

"Noh—noh, indeed; but if she disna get a fleg at the Gordons, the day afore the morrow, she'll maybe begin to think her ain thoght."

"Get up, lads!—up!" shouted a Farquharson who acted as lieutenant under Alaster. "Forget you the work we have to do before the sun that's long before us droops behint the Grampians?"

"What wark, maister Lauchey!" growled Donald askance, as the lieutenant passed him; but the musterer was too busy to heed the query, and too wise to notice the murmurs which in several places began to assume a mutinous appearance among the grumbling groups of this rude encampment.

When the smoke of two or three fires began to ascend, however, and the Highlanders had got a few mouthfuls

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of the venison and game which had been shot in abundance by the larger party the day previous, they began to grin with satisfaction in each other's faces, and to show their restored good-humour by sporting sundry gibes and jokes, which were much more enjoyed among themselves than they could be by our southland readers; who albeit have but small relish for Highland wit, particularly through the medium of our attempted translation into such anglicised Scotch as might make it understood. Suffice it to say, that by the time the men had made and partaken of their various crowdies and oaten cakes, and their savoury stews of the flesh of the game, with a stiff dram of the indispensable usquebaugh, they found both their tempers and their valour greatly improved, and set forth towards the haunt of the Gordons in Glenskiach with vigorous strides and high hopes of the issue of their expedition.

Coming soon after to an open part of the forest they mounted a rugged height, and Alaster surveyed with delight the romantic variety of the wild scenery before him, which on the right swept away over woods and glens towards the braes of Abernethy; and on his left the view became lost in the rugged fastnesses of the forest of Athol. He now began to understand with greater precision the localities of the extensive district of the Mar-wood, and was somewhat vexed that he should have been on the previous night surprised by the Gordon's men, at such a distance from the little valley or woody covert of Glenskiach.

Into one end of this glen the party now began to descend; and various contending thoughts and undefined purposes by degrees occupied the mind of its youthful leader, as he surveyed, in occasional peeps through the covert, the distant windings of the Dee, and meditated on his night-adventure in the neighbourhood, and on all that interested him regarding Moina Gordon. His broodings became more and more serious as he drew near to the spot where she dwelt, and as he thought of his own circumstances, as leader of a party sent for the express purpose of killing or banishing (a

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much more difficult matter) him whom he had vowed to protect, and who, whatever else he might be, was still the father of one becoming dearer to his thoughts every moment.

The small green plat, in front of the little assemblage of houses, or rather bothys, where the deer-reivers lived, now opened out in the wood in front of the party, and Alaster heard, with some concern, the bitter vows of his followers as they approached the baille of what they were determined to do with the lawless spoilers of the forest, so soon as, in a fair fray, they could get them within the strokes of their claymores. But no one as yet appeared near; not even a child played before the doors, or an old woman was seen to water her yarn or spread her clothes on the little green in front of the hamlet; nor had a single Gordon been observed or heard in the wood during the march of the morning.

There seemed something strange in the eyes of Alaster, if not ominous, in all this. Not even the slightest wreath of smoke seemed to curl from the wattled chimneys of the bothys as the party drew up in front; and it was evident that either the place was deserted by the deer-stalkers, or they had allowed their enemies to get thus near, in order the more effectually to entrap them by some concerted ambuscade.

Taking with him Colin M'Crone and another, Alaster, however, left his party, and fearlessly entered, as before, the principal building of the baille.

A very different scene now presented itself in the interior of this barn-like house, from what he had witnessed on his former visit. All seemed waste and desolate. The fire was extinguished that had formerly blazed so cheerfully, although its embers were still warm on the floor; and instead of the numerous tiers of hams hanging overhead, the blackened rafters of the building were exposed bare and unsightly under the dark thatched roof, which could scarcely be distinguished by the dim light that entered through the well-stuffed windows. Some rude furniture, including several large pots and earthen vessels, were found in

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this and the other houses; but not a living creature was to be seen, save a pair of large black cats, who scarcely attempted to move, but sat staring with their green eyes upon the intruders, and in Alaster's apprehension, agreeable to the superstition of the period, had a look of ill omen with them, as if they represented the living spirit of a vengeance-predicting desolation.

The whole party now took possession of the hamlet, at least for the present; and foreseeing that they might have a hungry enough time of it before their present expedition was brought to a close, they were determined to eat and drink while they had the opportunity: so, before many minutes had elapsed the chimneys smoked as briskly as ever they had done for the Gordons, and the venison was soon after stewing and boiling on the several hearths of the bothys.

"Shall we take up our quarters here, maister, if ye please, or shall we not?" said Colin M'Crone to Alaster, as the latter sat thoughtfully by himself, after their meal was over. "It's a gude hame enough in the wud, an' wha kens whare we may catch thae reiver-hunters? The red deer are no half sae cunning, though maybe they can rin faster, and we may chase them frae Abernethy to Aberdeen wi' naught but weary shanks an' hungry hotchells for our pains."

"Wherever we go, we shall not remain here, Colin," said his leader, soberly, "within the heart of the snare that the Gordons have laid for us. Trust me, this unexpected manœuvre bodes no good to the success of our expedition. But we must even now be up and setting forth. Up, my lads!—Up, and go again. There's many a step between the water of Durig and the birks o' Braeman"

In a short time they were on the road again, or rather tramping through the brambly passes of the forest; two trusty men having in the mean time been despatched in different directions to obtain intelligence of the position and movements of the reivers. But every step they proceeded, the mind of Alaster became more and more uneasy, concerning the end and object of this strange expedition, in which he was acting so unwilling,

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and yet apparently so cruel and deceitful a part; and his feelings became, as he went, deeply affected by his constant meditations on the present fate and future destiny of his pretty deliverer, the maiden of the forest, Moina Gordon.

CHAPTER VI.

As day closed in, Alaster Graham again halted his party under the shelter of a green knoll, still farther towards the verge of the forest, and near the border of a small lake, or rather strip of deep water, such as is often found in the fastnesses of the Highlands. Having posted watchers, one on the knoll, and several others at proper points near, to prevent his being surprised while he arranged future operations, he allowed his men to stretch themselves on the heath, and take their rest. A single fire had been kindled in a sort of recess indented into the knoll, and, as the men slept around, a succession of reflections bordering on sadness occupied the moody and restless thoughts of the leader of the expedition.

What these thoughts referred to needs little detail, when the circumstances of the youth are considered in regard to his noble kinsman, who had sent him to root out the Gordons from the forest—to his future fame and fortune, which so much depended upon his fulfilling his present duty, should he be allowed to take a part in the war in the Lowlands, of which he had formerly heard some distant rumours, and even to his character with his men, over whom he had accepted the command in this expedition, and who were bitterly zealous against the reiver-chief, whom he had undertaken to expel or to kill, after having vowed to be his individual protector.

At the bottom of all this was a feeling, which was as usual painful, because it was encompassed with anxiety, and alloyed with untoward apprehension; and

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yet delightful, because it was new, and the novelty consisted in the romance of imagined perfection in woman, in a world where all else is imperfect. It was the heavenly dream of impassioned affection, and fond friendship, where all else seemed to him coldness, self-interest, or avowed hate. Though strong and manly in person, the present was but the blossom of Alaster's life, and the novel sensation of love, mingling with grateful feelings to his pretty deliverer, came over his soul like touching music, amid the solitudes of the Mar-forest, and became deepened with the increasing thoughtfulness of manhood, and the necessary anxieties and responsibilities of his situation.

As he sat thus meditating, the man placed at the top of the knoll descended hastily down, and assuming an air of some importance, when he drew near, as if he had a mystery to communicate, said in a half-whisper, "As sure's death! captain, there's something yonder!"

"Where?"

"Just beyont the cairn, on the brae-face; come and see,"

Alaster mounted the knoll, and looked forth, with as much success as the hazy light would admit of, but could see nothing remarkable. "What was it you saw?" he inquired sharply.

"It was a man, or it was a natural moving thing, or maybe it was a ghaist," said the Highlander.

"Poh! mind your duty. It is not ghosts you are to look out for," said Alaster, rather peevishly.

"It's the God's truth," said the man, indignant at his leader's want of faith—"I saw it wi' my een, moving amang the breckans aboon the loch. If it wasna for that blinking shred o' a moon, ye would see it yoursel. But deel-beliked, I'll send a shaft through its wame, whatever it is," added the man, setting his bow in order.

"You'll do no such thing, without a challenge, and I giving the word," said Alaster, unwilling to trust so much to the discretion of the Highlander.

This false alarm having disturbed his reflections, however, after descending to where his men slept in the hollow, he took a turn round the foot of the little hill.

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towards the margin of the small pool or lake, whose clear waters lay cold and still at the foot of the slope; and scarcely could be said to reflect the dim beam from what the Highland sentinel had justly called a shred of a moon, which seemed to mock the wild landscape with her faint gleam of hazy light.

The silence was so perfect, in this open solitude of the forest, that every tread of Alaster's foot on the hollow sod, as he wandered some way towards the margin of the lake, under cover of the shadows of some straggling birch-trees, seemed to carry a loud and unwelcome echo, that gave note of his every step, to some distance round. As he looked forth over the light end of the pool, he plainly observed a long shadow move slowly beyond some brushwood between him and the shore. Stopping suddenly, the shadow also stopped, and he heard the low but clear "ahem!" of a woman's voice proceed from a few paces' distance beyond the brushwood. A thought instantly struck him; and starting at once into the open moonlight, and passing the bushes, he perceived a female wrapped in the long plaid or sagum of the Highlands, her head covered with it as a hood, in the fashion of the north; and as she stood to await his approach, he soon discovered the well-remembered features of Moina Gordon.

"Come not a step nearer," she said, holding up her hand, "unless you come to assure me, before Heaven, who looks down upon us, that you are not my father's enemy, and the foe of my clan,—and that you mean to keep the vow you made to me, in your own hour of trouble."

He said not a word, as he gazed on her for a moment with sudden excitement, but thrusting his hand into his bosom, and taking out the token which hung by a riband from his neck, he held it in the light of the moon; then kissing it fervently, he looked up to Heaven, and murmured an ejaculation, that the great God who watched over them both would be pleased to send a sudden calamity upon him, if he kept not the vow which he now renewed.

The fervent solemnity of the action was so unex-

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pected, and to the romantic Highland maiden seemed so noble, that clasping her hands together as she gazed, the tears rushed into her eyes, and in the passion of the moment unable to obtain from her any common salute, Alaster's arm wound round her waist, and yielding passively to her feelings, she sobbed in his embrace.

"Then you are not my enemy, nor my father's persecutor, after all, Alaster," she said, looking up, as she dried her tears—"yet you have made us flee like the startled deer from the warm covey of Glenskiach; and the landless exiles of the old Gordons are hiding themselves in rocks and caves of the earth, from the face of him who but for me would have been this night a buried corpse within the untrodden recesses of the forest."

"I shall never bring or suffer harm to you or yours, Moina," he said; "and I will this night give you proof of it at the risk of my life, if you will show me where I may meet your father and the men of his clan."

"What would you do, Alaster?"

"I would meet them singly in the confidence of the truce, which notwithstanding they have not sought; and I would speak to them as their comrade, and the friendly representative of the great Earl of Mar, my kinsman. Bring me to them, my pretty Moina, and I will sue even for friendship at thy father's hand, to second the love that is between thee and me."

"Ye shall ne'er say it again," she said blithely, "if ye will trust yourself to my guidance, for the hunters are not far to seek, although ye know it not. There's a corner of my plaid, Alaster, if ye're in earnest, and come with me."

Taking her arm, and wrapping round him the end of the plaid which she had so frankly offered, according to the fashion between lovers in the north, Alaster suffered himself to be led along beyond the brushwood, until they completely lost sight of the knoll behind which his men were posted. The path which Moina followed wound round a low hill above the narrow lake, but after proceeding some way, deserting it, at an angle in the rocks she entered a hollow way, or rather pass,

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which seemed to cut into the hill for some distance. After following for a space the windings of this gorge, suddenly the bank rose in a steep circle or bay, in their front, and their farther progress was to all appearance completely prevented. Alaster naturally stopped short when they came to the foot of the bank, and looked round into the face of his guide for an explanation.

"It's pleasant company, and happy moments," he said, smiling, "when young folks lose their way in the wood. But do not be ashamed, Moina; the dim moonlight scarcely can get in between these banks, so it is no wonder you should mistake your road; but our walk will be the longer—come back."

"Not so fast, Alaster. Think you the Gordons can lose their way in the Mar-forest? Hush! rest you here for an instant."

Taking the end of the plaid which was held by her lover and throwing it again over her shoulder, she dipped into the shaded side of the ravine, mounted nimbly a few steps up the steep, by the side of a large tree, whose top barely rose over the bank above them, and spoke a few words in Gaelic to a head that seemed to be thrust out from the bank.

Descending again, she held out her hand, and said to Alaster, changing her tone, "Come, sir, mount, if that is your will."

He climbed up the steep by the aid of the trunk of the tree, when after a little, following his guide as she made an opening among the bushes, their ascent seemed to wind into the face of the hill, and at the mouth of the pass Alaster perceived the grim face of a Gordon observing him keenly from his sentinel station. The glare of firelight soon after struck upon his eyes, as he turned an elbow of the pass, and presently he perceived himself in an area of considerable extent within the hill, though the aperture above from which air and light came was much narrowed at the top, and was surrounded by thick brambles and brushwood.

"Rest you here, for another moment," she said, as they stopped, "I will go and be your announcer;" but

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suddenly checking herself with hesitating agitation, she added, "Heaven grant that my father may not misinterpret my boldness!"

She tripped away, however, and was soon lost by a turning of the rock. This strange place of concealment appeared, as Alaster could see it, to consist partly of a cave and partly of rude erections of split trees, laid across a sort of paling which almost covered in the exterior part of the area, and within which burned several small fires. Round these Alaster could perceive, through the interstices of such rude walls, the ruddy faces of the wives and children of the deer-stalkers. A loud noise of tongues speaking in the high tone of wrath, within that part of the area which could not be seen from his present position, now arrested the attention of Alaster; he listened and heard his own name pronounced several times, in apparent fury, by a man, while the low and pleading tones of a woman's voice, evidently that of Moina Gordon, seemed endeavouring in vain to mollify the anger of the loud speaker. A moment's consideration showed Alaster the cause; when instantly stepping forth past the corner of the crag, and stooping as he entered an opening within which a fire blazed in the midst of a sort of cave, he stood boldly in the presence of Grumach Gordon.

The group, assembled in eager discussion in front of the fire that burned in the inner recesses of the cavern, started on seeing Alaster; and several of them drew their broadswords half out of their scabbards as he stepped forward within the entrance. The veteran chieftain himself appeared in the centre, his head bare, and the red firelight glaring with striking effect on his weatherbeaten features, as, excited by passion, he stood in an attitude calculated to inspire terror, over the drooping feminine figure of Moina his daughter.

"What!—is it so?—hah!"—was all that the old man was able to say in broken exclamations, as the tall form of Alaster strode fearlessly forward.

"Do you draw your weapons to a simple messenger, gentlemen?" said the latter, coolly, lifting his bonnet

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and bowing slightly, while his ruddy youthful features and curled raven hair, with his careless smile, as he thus stood exposed in the midst of his enemies, excited the involuntary admiration of all. "See you," he added, stretching out his unarmed hands, "I come as a friend."

"A friend!" repeated the leader of the deer-stalkers, with contemptuous wrath, "a spy! a spy, I say! and my daughter the abetter of the trick! But since you have a second time thrust your head into the lion's mouth, young man, glaumory and sorcery itself shall not deliver you. John of Leask, what stand you there for?" added the angry chieftain, pointing towards the entrance, which was instantly filled up by the scowling person addressed, and others of the reivers present.

"I have voluntarily put myself into your power," said Alaster, calmly, looking round upon those who placed themselves behind him; "but I came with my own flag of truce, to bear a friendly message from myself in the name of the great John, Earl of Mar, under an assurance from this maiden that her father would take no advantage of my confidence."

"Dared you give such an assurance to my worst enemy?" exclaimed the chief, menacingly, to the terrified girl.

"He is *not* our enemy, father—I know he is not. For Heaven's sake, at least hear him!" cried Moina, again assuming her tone of entreaty.

"Although you and your people, sir," said Alaster, "have made the noble proprietor of this forest your enemy, by your long-continued ravages upon the living produce of these wilds, and although he has sent me and my men to drive you hence with fire and sword, yet I would first entreat you in the language of friendship and justice, to leave the Mar-forest in quietness without the spilling of blood; for strife and bloodshed bring many woes, and the wandering reivers of the hills, however ancient their lineage, who shoot the roe because the dumb beast has no protection but its light

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foot, cannot cope with the proud lord, whose castle sends forth a thousand archers."

"And is that thy proposal? Sassenach youth!" exclaimed the chieftain, scornfully. "Go back, and tell the earl, that the forests of Scotland afford food and shelter for the hungry foxes that find none but enemies in the smooth plains of the Lowlands, and also a bield for the birds of the air themselves, who in spite of the cold blasts of the winter winds, do yet carol in their branching bushes, under the sweet sun of summer:—and while they do so, Highland shentlemen, whom the mischances of fortune have driven to the woods like badgers, shall never want a seething of venison in their pot while they can draw a bow. Here I have come, and the Earl of Mar knows it, and here will I abide over these brave men, while it is my pleasure, and my broadsword can defend me."

"Are there not the forests of Athol and of Badenoch, of Glenmore and Abergeldy?" said Alaster, anxiously, "and why should you harry only the game of Braemar? Retreat, Grumach Gordon, I beseech you!—at least for a time. I would not be thy enemy."

"Retreat!—the Gordons retreat!—and before thee! May the great God bring a curse upon—"

"Oh father! invoke not a curse upon us!" interrupted Moina. "Are we not already under the ban of Heaven, obliged to hide ourselves like for-driven thieves in the caves of the wood?"

"And from whom? from whom?—is it not from him there?" continued the old man with renewed rage—"from him whose sorceries have still delivered him out of the fang of my vengeance—from him who disarmed me before my own door!" and he gnashed his teeth at the thought,—"but vengeance I will have still. Go, Sassenach, and take my deep defiance with you! Grumach Gordon shall retreat before no man!"

In vain did Moina entreat, or Alaster argue. Obstinate hostility and deadly revenge, still deepening and more heartily resolved, amazed the understanding and saddened the hearts of the unsuccessful pleaders; but

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when the anxious maiden heard her father swear in his wrath that he would one day have the life of him who had conquered him in presence of his own family, and forced him from his warm covey in Glenskiach to take refuge here among the rocks in the wood, she prayed audibly with tears in her eyes, that Heaven itself would interpose to protect from her father's rash anger the stranger who now stood an ineffectual peace-maker in the midst of the group.

Instead of being mollified by the piety or moved by the tears and beauty of his daughter, the old man, standing forth in the centre, held up his clenched hand, and repeated with a hoarse voice and all the solemnity of vengeful passion his bloody oath.

"It will be a woful day for your own gray hairs, old man," said the youth, with another species of solemnity, "when that ungodly vow shall be fulfilled!—a day of wo it will be."

"A day of wo it will be," repeated a shrill and tremulous voice, from the inner crevices of the cave,—and the palsied head of a very old woman who now sat up from a rude couch behind the group, seemed for the first time to be giving eager attention to the scene.

"Oh! do not say so, dear grandmother," exclaimed Moina, in a tone of apprehensive agony, as she knelt beside the old woman.

The latter only shook her head sadly, as she contemplated the youthful features of her deceased daughter's child, and laid her head quietly back on the couch.

"Holy heavens!—I am under the powers of witchcraft!" exclaimed the chieftain, wildly.

Alaster now turned to leave the cave, but his exit was sullenly opposed by John of Leask and the others who stood between him and the entrance. An altercation, amounting almost to an uproar, now arose as to his being allowed to leave the retreat of the Gordons thus easily, with full power, as they averred, of making use of the knowledge thus cunningly obtained through the simplicity of a thoughtless maiden, to come upon them in their stronghold, and perhaps to drive them

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hence as he had obliged them to flee from Glenskiach. In vain he protested, that having taken no note, as he came in the obscure moonlight, of his way, he could not again find out the spot, and proposed to depart in any manner they should prescribe, whereby he might be rendered unable to make use of his local information. The darkest looks were exchanged between the infuriated Highlanders, and the darkest hints communicated as to the safest policy, of which the power they had gave them now the alternative. But when, in answer to his appeal as to the friendly manner in which he had thrown himself upon them in the character of a messenger, some one proposed that he should be blindfolded, and thus led out into a distant part of the forest, Alaster drew his long claymore, and retreating to an inner part of the cavern, seemed determined to sell his life at the dearest rate, rather than submit to such an indignity.

The hunters now grouped together near the entrance, in contentious but whispering consultation, while Moina addressed a few words of anxious entreaty to Alaster, between whom and her father she went and returned several times. At length woman prevailed, and the brave representative of the noble house of Mar consented to suffer his eyes to be bandaged, so soon as he was brought outside of the bank where he had first mounted behind the tree; the only condition appended to this arrangement being, that his conductor should be a mere boy, and unarmed, and that he should not be taken, in his hooded state, more than ten minutes' walk from the place where the bandage should be put on.

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CHAPTER VI.

There was something in the situation of Alaster Graham, as he suffered himself to be led blindfolded through the narrow ravine or glen, up a diverging ascent, and over the surrounding broken and heathy ground, after he left the stronghold of the deer-stalkers, that was painfully novel, and not without a sense of degradation. Mingled with this, there were both sadness and anxiety. Sadness, mixed with feelings of delight, from certain speaking looks at parting, and the trembling pressure of a soft hand, stealthily conveyed into his, by Moina Gordon; and anxiety, always the effect of the spreading forth of the social affections, and the discovery of new channels of promised felicity. Musing over various matters of the present and the anticipated, Alaster forgot his ten-minutes' engagement, while proceeding onwards even blindfolded as he was, and the cunning urchin who led him along seemed in no haste to apprize him of the lapse of time.

"Where, in the name of St. Andrew, are you taking me, boy?" he at length exclaimed, stopping suddenly, after nearly breaking his shins on a stone, in the uneven ground over which he was travelling.

"Hersel may take aff the brecham frae her een noo, I'm thinking," said the boy, archly.

Removing the bandage, Alaster, upon looking round, found himself in the thick of the forest again, and on turning himself towards the part that was most open, what of the country he could see by the dim light of the quarter-moon was totally unknown to him.

"My good youth," he said to the boy, "as you have been the blindman's dog to me thus far, will you just tell me on which side of me to turn, that I may soonest reach the little loch that lies in a hollow somewhere in this neighbourhood?"

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"If her nainsel's honour and glory," said the boy, with a grin, "turns her lug to the lown o' the brae, she'll maybe hear the tramp o' her ain feet the better; an' if she turns her nose to the way the wind comes, she'll maybe find the smell o' her ain peat-reek;" and with this impertinent reply the giggling little villain made off to the left, and instantly darting behind the bushes, left our hero alone and in no small perplexity.

"This is to be another night-wandering adventure in this wilderness, I see," said Alaster to himself, as he deliberated a few moments where he stood, then making his way towards the openest part, he strained his eyes to endeavour to decide by the appearance of the country before him which course to pursue. But though aware that the boy, as instructed, must have led him into a part of the forest as perplexing as possible in relation to the locality from which he had just been conveyed, he hoped, by ascending the nearest height, to discover some slight glare of light in the surrounding wild, to lead him to where his own fire burned under the knoll on which his men were posted.

The height that he ascended for this purpose, however, was so thickly covered with wood, and so broken and rugged, that he was soon obliged to descend where there was clearer footing; but as yet he could make out no trace of the small loch which he sought, nor of any fire appearing throughout the dim peeps of opening in the straggling forest. As he continued to descend, he found the light becoming more and more obscure, and looking up perceived that the moon was already down and thick darkness was fast gathering round him. He now began to get somewhat timorous and to feel fatigue, as his footing became more and more uncertain, and as involuntary fancies regarding deep lochs, pitfalls, and precipices successively crossed his imagination.

"It matters little; I can sleep till morning here as well as among my own men," he said, as he threw himself down on the rustling heath; but at the moment, the space before him being somewhat open and level,

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he thought he perceived a faint light. He looked earnestly, and was sure he observed a light like that of a fire, yet so dim was it that he could only see it at all by looking for some moments steadily in one direction. Its very dimness, however, he thought, proved its reality, for had it been an *ignis fatuus*, the phosphoric fire of the bogs, it would have been ten times more brilliant and distinct. It might prove to be the faint gleam of his own fire by the knoll after all. He determined to rise and follow it, as it was apparently so near.

It was not, however, until after nearly half an hour's further travelling over a species of ground that would have discouraged the heart of any but a mountaineer, that he reached a small Highland cottage or sheiling, which he now began to be certain must belong to some other portion of his enemies. Danger with him, however, was rather a recommendation than otherwise to any adventure, and stepping up boldly he knocked at the door of the cottage. It was opened by a middle-aged woman, to whom he briefly explained that he was a stranger who had lost his way in the forest.

While the good woman, with hospitable Highland civility, invited Alaster to enter, he had no sooner spoken in reply, than a voice within giving a preliminary "Eigh oigh!" immediately after, out jumped from a sort of crib, or wooden bedstead in the wall, a half-dressed figure, who, throwing himself down on his knees, embraced firmly the legs of our hero, at the same time uttering something between a howl and a scream of joyful recognition.

"And are you really still in the land of the living, Farquhar?" said Alaster, raising gently his resuscitated servant. "By the word of a duinuasal, I ken'd ye were hard to kill; but, in sooth, drowning's a death that some need have small dread of, while there's a handful o' hempseed to saw in the Lowlands. God save ye all here!" he added, turning round and saluting the other inmates of the cottage.

"Pless us the night, an' pless us the morn," said the Highland woman, courtesying to Alaster; "but the

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strangers pe plenty the noo, an' the shentlemans pe ganging fast through the wood, to the wars an' rumours."

"Wars and rumours!" repeated Alaster, observing more in detail the square forms and brown visages of two stalwart Highlanders, who, dressed in the gaudy tartan of the Stewart's clan, sat "beyond the reek" of the peat fire that burned in the centre of the sheiling.

"The praw stranger 'll pe for the wars too, na doot," said the woman to one of the Highlanders, as Alaster seated himself.

"To pe surely—her nainsel's honour 'll pe for the wars," answered the man aloud, with Highland flattery. "Kens she aught about them, if a pody may speer," he added, addressing Alaster.

"No," said our hero, simply; "I've heard of the wars in the Low Countries certainly, but what have we who live here on the hills to do with king or Covenanter? The king is now an Englishman, and knows nothing or cares nothing for the braid Highlands, or the proud clans of the Gael; and as for the Covenanters, it's my notion they like a preaching better than a piobrachd ony day. I know of no wars worth the name."

"Her nainsel maun pe as deaf as the gray crag o' Glencronaghen," said the Highlander, assuming a scornful superiority, "if she hasna heard the news. But maybe she'll pe a Campbell frae the wast, an' a seven-an'-twenty half-cousin o' the great Earl o' Argyle, wi' his plack scull-hoods, his skraighing sawm-singing, forby his preaching grunt,—pah!—pewh!"

"I really don't know what you mean, friend," was Alaster's reply, slightly offended, yet speaking with all the good-nature of a man of real courage.

"Then her nainsel's honour and clory maun be just as ignoramus as a prute peast, for a' her braw biodag and her braid sporan," said the strange Highlander, jeeringly, as he glanced at the silver ornamented dirk by Alaster's side, and the ample tasseled purse that hung before him; "for a' the glens are ringing frae

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Lochgoil in the wast to Johnny Groat's hoose at the world's end, wi' the blithe news o' the wars o' the gallant Montrose."

"If your news be true, it's at least not very politely communicated," said Alaster; "but truly, friend, I am so well disposed to a little civil warfare, that for your jeer I am quite ready to give you a taste of either biodag or claymore, long lance or sken-dhu, whenever your valiant braggartship shall choose, in fair daylight, come the morning."

"Pohoogh! oigh! hoot away, lad. Ye're a braw boy for the wars! an' my vera particular friend and lovier," shouted Morrough M'Combich, standing up, "and I'll just beg your free pardon for my civil joke, an' there's my loof on't; for disna ae shentleman ken anither a' the worl' o'er? There," and he held out a hand of no Lilliputian dimensions, "just shake me by the fist, if ye dare, as the muckle de'il said to the Lowlander."

Alaster, laughing at the odd humour of the fellow, could not refuse his proffered hand, and shaking it cordially, they sat down the closest of friends to discourse of "the wars and rumours;" which news, being such a rarity in these remote quarters, presented a theme of the most exhilarating interest to the youthful ambition of our hero.

"It's a tamn'd shame an' a conscionable confusion!" exclaimed the animated Gaelic stranger, ambitious to show off the elegance of his English, while he eyed Alaster's person from head to foot; "for such a buirdly galliard as her nainsel's clory to be creeping about here like a moudiewort in the woods when there's claymores ringing far a-field; yet here she'll be herding wi' the red deer in the forest o' Braemar like a cowardly hurcheon, while the great Montrose is marching to the battle,—bagpipes playing,—horses neighing,—trumpets blawing,—up wi' the war-cry! *Tulach ard!* cries the Mackenzie;—*Fraoch eilan!* cries Macdonald;—*A dh' aindeoin cotheireadh e!* cries Clan Ranald.—*Whoo! hoop!*"—and jumping up on the floor, and flourishing

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his short stick, the man seemed about to run to the charge in the faces of his startled auditors, who sat staring on him in good-natured admiration.

"*Hoigh! poigh!*" shouted the same fellow again slapping Alaster's bare knee in the most irreverent manner, on observing the ruminating look of our hero, —"What'll her honour's clory be musing aboot, when she sits there in the neuk like a contemplation."

"Never mind me, friend, but go on with your news of the war."

"I ken brawly what'll be in her honour's thoughts," continued the persevering Atholman; "she'll hae some sweetheart in the wood—some leman lass that keeps her frae her sleep at night, and rins between hersel' an' her wits by day. Fy! feigh!—a petticoat an' a tonnag—a blue e'e an' a saft word to keep a young fellow frae the wars, when gude men are on the heather, an' the slogan is sounding frae Lorn to Lochaber. Piewgh! fewgh!"

Although the enthusiasm of Morrouch M'Combich was somewhat too roistering and obstreperous for the quiet habits of our hero, he did not himself fail to catch a good portion of it during the remainder of the conversation; and even his invalid servant, Farquhar, half-drowned as he had been, and wounded, and still sore with bruises, began to caper on the floor, and to long exceedingly for a tilt at the psalm-singing men of the covenant. Though also the sheiling in which this chance assembly were convened belonged to the scattered clan of the Macrabins, also deer-stalkers of the wood, yet even when the name and quality of Alaster came to be known, the sacred law of hospitality kept all now met in friendship for the remainder of the night; for our hero soon concluded that it was in vain to seek his own party until he should have the benefit of the light of a new day.

After therefore eating together the friendly bread and salt, besides partaking of the good woman's store of goat's-milk cheese, cold venison, and oaten bannocks,—the whole seasoned with a tass of usquebaugh and a

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hearty pinch of Highland snuff by way of dessert (a delicate luxury procured at the refined town of Aberdeen), the whole gathering became drowsy from the day's fatigue, and addressing themselves to sleep where they sat, each man began to doze as the red embers of the turf-fire sank away into darkness, and deep quietness soon resumed her reign over the surrounding solitudes of Braemar.

CHAPTER VII.

The vindictive wrath of Grumach Gordon against his daughter, for having thoughtlessly introduced his enemy into the very stronghold of the clansmen, vented itself after the departure of Alaster in bitter and deep reproaches. But Moina, with the patient reverence of a daughter for a parent, even under the influence of passion or mistake, answered not again; but when her father's wrath began to cool, occasionally edged in a word of mild and explanatory remonstrance.

Grumach, however, had a strong spice of military craft, such as it was, as well as of suspicion in his character, naturally acquired during the marauding life which he had led for thirty years; and having laid his plans in consequence of the discovery of his retreat, and consulted over them with John of Leask, he took a few hours' rest, and by the gray light of the morning his men had already descended the ravine under the hill, within which their women were left behind, and were cautiously marching in the hollow towards the small loch or pool before-mentioned, being completely screened from the view of the sentinel stationed on the knoll, by the thick brushwood beyond which Alaster had been led the night previous.

Meanwhile the small company at the bothy had also

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roused itself at cock-crowing, and all were preparing for their departure.

"He's a teevil o' a troublesome body that," growled Morrouch M'Combich, impatiently, at Farquhar, as he waited on the adjustment of the various bandages and bucklings with which the legs and wings of that wounded Samaritan were encumbered, through the kind attention of the Macrabin women, on whom the crafty henchman had contrived to pass himself as a clansman from Lochaw, who had fallen in with a skirmishing party from the wars; "tamn her plaisters an' poluses, an' her pothecaries' ointment! but de'il belicked," he continued, as, looking askance, he next observed the invalid comforting his heart with a lump of the good-wife's oaten bannock, and a gulp of her aquavitæ. "De'il be in her maw, but she sets her sickness uncommonly; for it hasna got near to the vital parts o' her stomach yet. Lauchey, come awa."

The whole four were soon on their way as far as they knew it, at least they were tramping, according to the direction of their host, through the soft heath of a strip of moor; for they now found themselves on an open part of what was still called the forest. The high ground only was covered with the elm and Scotch pine-fir, whose dark prickly tops intercepted the bright rays of the morning sun, which now began to peep pleasantly over the irregular summit of the Grampians. Alaster wondered that he could not as yet recognise the country, though he was certain that the small loch, the knoll, and his men could not be far distant.

"And so her nainsel's honour an' pleasure has said her swear, that she shall hae a pook at the skirts an' a fleg at the flanks o' thae traitor whigs an' preachical covenant-men," said Morrouch M'Combich to Alaster, in his ordinary elegant English, as they went along almost at a Highland trot. "Pipers an' piobrachds! Dorlachs an' skene-occles! but this present would pe a sweet spot for a bit comhraig brulzie. Got pless us! put I wuss the wars were here just the noo. De'il hauds my haunds that I dinna draw my claymore an'

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kill that limping body wi' the bandages afore my breakfast, just for a practice."

"Put your fingers in your ain mouth an' try your teeth on your ain thumb till the time comes, friend," said Farquhar, in answer; "I'll warrant ye'll get practice enough before Montrose an' his men cross the Frith of Forth, or beat Johnny Urrie beyond the border."

"Hoolagh! What's that?" suddenly shouted the enthusiastic Atholman.

"What! eigh! heard ye the whistle an' a clatter o' claymores too, as sure's death?" screamed his companion.

"Heugh! heugh!" again whooped Morrouch, running forward, "see ye there! rin, lads—here's a maist pleasant tuasaid just anoth our nose. Got pless the wars an' the rumours! Rin, ye deevils. Lauchey, what are ye swithering at?"

"Whilk side will ye take in the stramash," said his neighbour Highlander, coolly, and drawing out his broadsword.

"Ony side it pleasures his honour here," said Morrouch; "teevil may care! haste ye! or the fight 'll be o'er, an' we'll no get a stroke struck!"

With this all the four ran with speed to where they had heard a whistle, and then a shout, and now observed under the knoll, which the hip of the fir-covered height on their left now revealed, Alaster's men confusedly engaged with the deer-stalkers, who having come upon them by surprise, from their superior knowledge of the *locale*, the former evidently fought at a disadvantage, and some of them already began to give way.

"Follow me, friends! behind the knoll!" cried Alaster to his new acquaintances.

"It's tamn'd round about though," said the eager M'Combich.

"A Graham! a Graham!" shouted Alaster after the Highland custom, as he and his friends joined the fray.

This seasonable reinforcement soon turned the fortune of this irregular contest, and Alaster's men, shout-

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ing in answer for joy of the well-timed return of their leader, at once drove back the Gordons beyond the recess in the knoll. The Highlanders, on both sides, were so well acquainted with their weapons that only one man of the deer-stalkers was killed, and but few wounds had as yet been received, when, contrary to his wish, Alaster was sought out by, and soon found himself engaged hand to hand with Grumach himself. The reiver chief eyed his antagonist with intense fury when they met, his look plainly intimating his joy in the opportunity of revenging the affront of his former defeat. As they joined swords, the attention of Alaster was momentarily arrested by a screaming cry emanating from among the fires on the hill behind his enemy, which overlooked the little holm where the fight had taken place, for, according to custom, some women and children of the reivers were witnesses of the fray; and he even imagined that he heard the shriek of Moina as she saw him about to spill the blood of her father.

The effect of this discovery had nearly cost the youth his life; for the old chief pressed hard upon him, seeing him stand entirely on the defensive, and he had to retreat three or four paces to avoid the eager vengeance of the old man. Recovering in an instant after his presence of mind, however, his strength and courage once more came fully to his aid; and succeeding, by the superior vigour of his arm, in turning aside his adversary's sword, he sprang in upon him, and wresting the weapon out of his hand, the old man fell with the shock, and lay a second time at Alaster's feet, panting for breath, and in dumb astonishment at so unusual an occurrence.

By this time the other clansmen had fled on all sides, being hard pressed, in particular by Morrouch M'Combich, whose enthusiastic valour, in spite of a slight wound in the face, was quite disappointed at the shortness of so agreeable an exercise as this fray afforded him "just for practice." The whole of the Gordons, except two and their leader, had found refuge among

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the irregular rocks which faced the woody hills on which the women were placed; and now Farquhar, by his master's order, proceeded with alacrity to bind behind them the hands, not only of the two common prisoners, but those of the veteran chieftain himself. The great object of his expedition being thus happily accomplished, in a way to leave the ultimate determination of the fate of the leader of the deer-stalkers to his noble employer, with whom Alaster could easily intercede for his safety; putting his men in order, he was soon again on his march back, towards the castle of Braemar.

CHAPTER VIII.

The morning sun, which seldom at this season had so early dispelled the mists that crowned the many heads of the great range of the Grampians, now began to peep in glowing brightness over the rugged heights to the east of Blair Athol, as Alaster and his men tramped cheerly on in their march through the forest. Keeping the higher ground,—from which they had occasionally picturesque peeps through among the trees of the windings of the Dee, as here, comparatively in its infancy, the stream brawled beneath among rugged rocks, or swirled round and settled into linns and pools, through the broken tanglements of its irregular current,—the Highland party next dived into the dark depths of the wood, in order the more speedily to get to the castle of Braemar.

Grumach Gordon and the other two prisoners, bound and disarmed, trudged on in the centre of the party, in dogged silence, and with looks of dark and vindictive gloom. The two strangers, namely Morrouch M'Combich and his companion, chose also to accompany Alaster to Braemar castle, as there they expected to meet with some gathering of the clans, who were likely

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to have by this time assembled to join the rising in the north under the gallant Montrose.

The further conversation of this redoubtable clansman, as, sticking close by the side of our hero while on the march, he continued to feed the fancy of the youth with glowing pictures of the pleasures of war, the glories of victory, and the prospects of plunder, was to the latter exceedingly exhilarating. Upon the matter of the spulzie to be obtained in the wars, Morrouch dwelt with sincere gusto, especially when they should come to have the good fortune of gutting the houses of the rich burghers of Aberdeen or Dundee, or haply of the wealthy merchants of Glasgow in the west, who had all taken up the cause of the covenant, with the most unaccountable wrong-headed wilfulness—evidently that, under Providence, the brave followers of Montrose might have no lack of booty when they should have left their bare hills to fight in so good a cause. This cause was no other than that of Royal Charlie himself, who in addition would shower upon them ultimately many honours and promotions; their perfect success under their gallant leader being a thing not to be spoken of with the slightest doubt.

While our hero and Morrouch, with sundry subsidiary listeners, were engaged in this gratifying discourse, emerging out from the thicket of the wood, and coming upon a heathy ridge where the view of the hilly, picturesque country, from Braemar to Kildrummy, opened out on all sides, the ears of the party were refreshed by a distant strain of the bagpipe, which, far in the vale beneath them, came up at the moment with great effect from the sweeping entrances of the glen, and which, playing a wild martial piobrachd, touched the very souls of the errant Highlanders. Hasting to the top of the ridge, they observed the blue bonnets, dark tartan jackets, and short feile-begs of a considerable body of men, who, carrying the standard of the Stewarts of Appin, and armed only with target and claymore, dirk and skene-dhu, after the ancient fashion, were wind-

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ing along the hollow with evident pride and picturesque regularity.

"Lamh Dhia Sinn! Oh, clory an' praise, see ye that?" cried Morrouch in an ecstasy—"Deevil almighty! what a creat army!—a hunder a thoosand gallant shentlemans frae the braes o' Appin, marching, like a Bannockburn to the great wars an' the rumours! Hoigh! Got tam!—rin, lads, and see the clory!"

In short, the effect of this animating sight, not only upon the enthusiastic Morrouch M'Combich, but upon Alaster himself and the whole of the party, aware as they were of the destination of so gallant a gathering, is scarcely to be described. But when, as the party came more fully into view, another piper joined the former, and each, in all the pride of his profession, blew into the drones of the instrument, while his cheeks were almost split with the exertion, and the skirl of their warlike music echoed up and along the glen, until the very walls of old Kildrummy seemed to send back the sound, Morrouch could stand it no longer, but drawing his claymore, and flourishing it round his head, he danced and capered, and "whoogh'd," and whooped, in his enthusiasm, until Alaster's whole party catching the infection, as they came to the brow of the height, set up one simultaneous halloo, waving their bonnets in acclamation to the gathering in the glen. Even the prisoners, and old Grumach himself, joined in the shout;—and when the clan in the hollow, thinking that this was another legion collected in the same cause, answered with all the enthusiasm of the Gael this spontaneous slogan of the coming war,—the sound of so many human voices in the wilderness, joining in the simultaneous hurra! as it echoed away in the wild passes towards the mountains, had an effect that was positively sublime.

"Oigh! Got be a clory, Lauehey! did ye ever hear such a beautification?" exclaimed Morrouch in a rapture to his neighbour. "Draw your sword, ye deevil, for the honour o' Montrose, an' look like a sodger marching to the pleasurement o' the wars, Hoigh!—tamn her!".

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Turning the angle of the ridge soon after, the dark turrets of Braemar castle next came into view, rising tall and warlike beyond the windings of the Dee, and by the time Alaster and his men rounded the heavy hill which rises close behind it, various other parties of the Gael from different districts in the neighbourhood began to show themselves successively to the delighted spectators, as with picturesque effect they issued from the different passes in the glens, or poured down the green sides of the surrounding hills. Drawing near in tolerable order, the strains of their different bagpipes, mingling in wild and exciting discordance, as the sounds echoed from the distance,—had, to the enthusiastic Highlanders, a peculiarly stirring if not striking effect.

A proud youth had Alaster Graham been all day, while proceeding through the woods at the head of his own small company; but as all greatness is comparative, *his* shrunk almost into nothing, in his own estimation, as, coming in with his few followers, he witnessed the pride of the Gaelic chieftains marching at the head of their compact legions of wild clansmen. Never had he seen so animating a sight as he now witnessed in the strath of Braemar.

Even the castle itself, which still stands upon a slight rising ground, within a few hundred yards of the Dee, and is merely a tall, black, and somewhat triangular building, with its pepper-box turrets, toppling from the corners beneath the chimneys, and an antique round tower with a screw-staircase shooting up in the inner angle, where one part of the building appears awkwardly stuck against the other, seemed to look down with a natural Highland pride upon the brave array who now made the scene so stirring all round it.

Alaster, on his arrival, could scarcely make his way through the crowd which surrounded the earl; and his own importance was sadly damped, as, on announcing his return, and naming his prisoners, he received a hasty command to see them attended to a place of security, and to wait until the earl should have leisure to give his attention to this matter.

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Meantime the usual preparation for the hospitable entertainment of the chieftains and people caused great bustle among the numerous underlings of the castle, and as every kind of gathering forms an excuse for getting up that glorious species of mountaineer enjoyment, a Highland feast, nothing was now omitted that use and want had made sacred to a cheerful parting banquet, before the clans, now assembling at Braemar, took their departure to join the brave Montrose. Several oxen, sheep, red deer, and kids the servants were roasting whole for the use of the guests, and more than one great potfull of poultry and game, were already stewing in the kitchens and at the rear of the castle. A great fire was kindled on the lawn, round the gnarled trunk of an old oak, according to ancient custom, which oak was appropriately called the trunk of the feast, and at this fire the largest beeves were roasting on wooden stakes, and now sent forth a peculiarly tempting savour. Within the best apartment of the castle two tables were covered for the earl and his principal guests, while his common retainers without lent handy assistance to the servants employed on the green, in setting up such temporary erections for the accommodation of the inferior clansmen as the occasion admitted of.

While all were occupied in different ways, Alaster was, with his prisoners, hastily summoned into the presence of the Earl of Mar. In an upper chamber of the castle, a plain square apartment, sat his lordship, surrounded by a close group of Gaelic chiefs, mixed with his own retainers, whose warlike appearance and stern nobleness of mien, as they eyed our youth and his men, formed a scene that was strikingly, though unpretendingly imposing. Its effect was greatly heightened by the presence of old Grumach Gordon, who, slightly bound, bare-headed, and disarmed, and with a look more of defiance than humility, strode boldly up towards the centre of the group.

"Bring you me a single prisoner, young man?" said the earl, sternly.

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"Yes, my lord, with only two others; but I bring you Grumach the reiver himself."

"And could he not have been disposed of without being led like a tethered bull into our own presence? Is there not a donjon beneath the level of the sward that surrounds this castle, which might be fit lodging for this audacious despoiler? But you seem to have a request to prefer. If so, speak it."

"It is that Grumach Gordon may be set at liberty. Nay, start not, my lord," said Alaster; "he is willing to join the brave Montrose in the wars, and to take with him the whole Gordons and Macrabins of Glenskiach."

"Alaster, you are but a young man," replied the earl, eying the youth with a meaning look; "claymores have been drawn, and blood has been spilt in the wood, and yet you have brought me this old man's crafty head upon his own shoulders. I like not this impolitic humanity."

"Dhia gledh sinn!" exclaimed the prisoner, losing all restraint on his tongue, "are my two ears to hear this spoken to an unfortunate chieftain of the ancient clan of the Gordons? Gentlemen, Stewarts and Macdonalds," he continued, addressing himself to the assembled chiefs, "will you stand there and see a duinuasal and a Gordon treated thus? Will you coolly allow an old man to be beholden to and reproached with the cruel humanity of a boy?"

The chiefs crowded round and spoke apart to the earl, who, after further questioning with Alaster, said aloud,

"Old man, upon condition of your departing with these gallant chieftains to join the noble Montrose, you are free."

The old man bowed his gray head in token of assent.

"Gille-coise," added the earl to his henchman, "let not a Gordon remain longer in bonds in my presence, and let them partake of the festivities which none shall be denied who are within my walls this day."

With evident feelings of remaining vindictiveness

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and wounded pride, the old man was conducted from the presence of the earl, with whom Alaster, however, remained, and being introduced to the chiefs, was very soon also appointed to a command under one of them, in the army destined to join the forces of Montrose.

As the day advanced the feast was set in the manner which has so often been described; with the usual rude but imposing magnificence in the hall, and clumsy plenty on the green in front of the castle. Within, the earl presided in all the glory of feudal state, the pipers playing during the whole time of the repast, exhilarating strains of warlike music, which, however deafening to modern ears, certainly took nothing from the keenness of the appetites of the ravenous Highlanders. In the evening, when the wine and whiskey began to take effect, the chiefs and lairds, beginning to snap their fingers and thump the table to the lively strains of their pipers, could keep no longer on their seats, and a dance, the usual sequel of such good cheer, was from right to left called for; until the word being carried to the green without, numbers of men and women incontinently rushed into the hall, and in five minutes' time one of the great tables was completely cleared away, its seats were moved to the walls, and lairds and ladies prepared for the dance.

CHAPTER IX.

The dames of the household at Braemar castle, as well as all who lived near, knowing the humour and manner of a Highland feast, and that all festive gatherings in their glens must end either with a dance or a fight, if not with both, had dressed themselves in their best in readiness for the merry exercise; and the show of healthy beauty that now graced the hall filled the oldest of the men present with that pleasure as well as

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pride which such a sight, in the moment of exhilaration, is calculated to produce upon the warm-hearted inhabitants of the cold mountains of the north. Some parley, however, took place before the dance began, while the ladies of the earl's household were led into the hall, and as Alaster stood up with other youths, and looked at the rosy countenances of the Highland damsels, seeking to find a partner, he caught a glimpse of a half-concealed face in the rear of the throng, that sent the blood quickly from his heart. He scarcely could believe his eyes, yet the impression upon himself convinced him he had made no mistake. Pushing his way through among the others, towards the more obscure part of the hall near the entrance, he soon found the interesting object that had attracted him, and, in short, before he was able to speak from surprise, he had pressed the hand frankly put into his, of his little enthusiastic maiden of the forest, Moina Gordon.

"I have followed my father," she said, "all the way hither to Braemar, and you, Alaster, have procured his freedom. I must thank you, although *he* does not."

"God bless thy fair looks, my pretty Moina," he said, caressingly, as they stood behind backs, "but come, I want thee—hark!"

"Who leads off the dance?" the Earl of Mar called out, good-humouredly, as Alaster was speaking,—at the same time rising from his seat at the top of the hall.

Several of the chiefs and ladies now crowded round him. "No!" he added aloud, in answer to the suggestion of one of them, "there shall be no distinction of ranks in this night's Ceumsiubhail. The chief shall foot it with the damsel of the sheiling, and the proudest lady in Braemar castle shall not refuse to beck to the bow of the bonneted lad who has a light heel and quick ear for reel or strathspey. Come!—where is Alaster Graham, my handsome forester? Alaster," he continued as the latter came forward, "you shall begin the dance; choose you a partner first, and not the proudest dame here shall refuse your challenge."

The few Highland dames present stood round ad-

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miring the youth, as he bowed in answer to the speech of the earl, each expecting to have the triumph of being selected for his partner; but he, passing the whole of them by, and stepping to the lower end of the hall, brought from among the crowd of lowly damsels, a modest figure of simple beauty in the slender person of Moina Gordon.

Manifesting much reluctance to come forward thus publicly, Moina struggled for a moment with her lover, for Alaster had employed some gallant freedom in urging her to lead the dance, and to proceed with him towards the centre of the hall; when, as all eyes were now directed to her, the brooch which fastened her plaid or sagum of striped stuff, gave way and the garment falling on his arm, exposed her person to the view of all.

The close dress which enclosed the bust of the blushing girl was actually of silk, and the dark-green tartan of the clan of the Gordons being the ancient Caracchalamh, or jupe of the Lowlands, was made nearly like the spencer of later times, but terminated in a picturesque boddice of red stuff, very much in the style of those worn by the Swiss girls at this day. A short petticoat of light blue mankey, with laced sandals of tanned deer-skin on her feet, and stockings of red and white dicing on her legs, composed the dress of the lower part of her person; and her thick fair hair, bound with a sprig of a bright species of myrtle, all showed, that, seated by the banks of some clear pool, before she came to the castle, the Highland maiden had taken no small pains with her toilet, with a natural view to the admiration of him whom she had followed thus far.

A titter of female curiosity and a toss of the head among the dames at the upper end of the hall was the consequence of Alaster's choice; but soon as the floor was filled, the call of the earl to his pipers, with their exhilarating preludes as they puffed and tuned their instruments, adjusting the branching drones over their shoulders with all the consequence of their important vocation, added not a little to the general festive excitement.

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"Play up 'The Graham's Gathering, at the lucky rock in Strathspey'—or no, let it be '*Thogail mam bo*—for the MacFarlanes,'" cried the earl—"'We come through the drift to drive the prey,'" he added, translating into English that popular air—"*that* is most appropriate to the morrow's duties. Play, lads! play!—the piobrachd, first at least, for a prelude to the lighter music."

As the dance afterward went on, and was deeply enjoyed by the animated youngsters, Grumach Gordon slipped in from among the crowd without, his old heart kindling with all the enthusiasm of youth at the sound of the strathspey and the sight of the company; when watching the gleeful agility of the dancers, he perceived among the very foremost his constant conqueror, Alaster Graham. But what was his astonishment when, on looking farther, he saw that youth handing round and setting, in the greatest familiarity as his partner, with his own daughter Moina Gordon. Placing himself on a bench behind the company, the old man sat gazing under his gray bushy eyebrows, at the happy pair, while various passions contended in his mind—involuntary admiration for so handsome a couple, which he could not repress, was mixed with dark and vengeful wrath, still burning against the youth, and a confusion of plans for the punishment of his thoughtless and wilful daughter.

The lovers, however, enjoyed themselves unconsciously the whole evening, and danced together the threesome reel, and the quartette strathspey, the lightsome Highland hornpipe of the Shan-trius; and footed, with their respective Gaelic names, and in the true Gaelic style, the forward step and the setting step, the tripping cross-springs and the graceful cuartage or turning step, in a manner surpassing all others of the best mountaineer dancers present. The scowling ire of old Grumach himself began to be lost in his parental pride, and extorted admiration; and when the earl and Glenleg of Athol took a turn round the hall, attracted from their seats by their sympathy with the evident enjoyment of the

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dancers, the old man came forth from his obscure recess, and threw himself in the way of hearing their conversation.

"By my faith, a likely couple!" exclaimed the earl, as he contemplated the two now left almost alone in the middle of the hall, "who can this tasteful little maiden be whom I have admired all night? for she is neither dighted and dizened like the stately dames of Braemar, nor is she at all like the humble nigheans of the glens."

"What think your lordship if she be the daughter of the veteran forest-reiver of Glenskiach? Nay, I am certain of it," answered the Laird of Glenleg, "for I observed them talking together as father and daughter may talk, and the maiden's apparel befits the notions of the old man, who still, even though hiding in the dens of the forest, calls himself a chief of the old Gordons of Morven."

"Ha! is that the case?" cried the earl; "now I see the meaning of the galliard's lenity to the wild deer-stalkers, and his anxious pleading for this audacious old man. By my sooth there is not a buck that tosses his branching antlers in the woods of Athol but this youth would give to the pot of the hunters for one soft word of the reiver's young fawn. See how they smile upon each other, and twist and twine together in the dannsadh. But I will raise an obstacle between them as high and as hard to get over as the black rock of Aviernoch. It must not be that the slightest sprinkling of the blood of Braemar shall ever join the contaminate current that flows in the veins of the reiver broken-men of my forest."

"She never shall! never shall!" exclaimed a hoarse voice from behind, and in a tone that sounded through the hall above even the loud notes of the bagpipes. In another instant the aged cearnach presented himself in an attitude of dogged pride facing the earl.

"No!" he repeated, "I say no! never shall the ancient blood of my people mix with the base blood of a mongrel bastard, even though he be a by-blow of the

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proud house of Mar! Nay, start not, haughty earl. I have said it! I am a ruined man, and your prisoner mayhap; but my name is Grumach Gordon!"

The earl turned his astonished look from the old man, and cast it with stern scorn towards the chief beside him.

"Cur of a wood-thief, speakest thou thus to the Earl of Mar's face?" exclaimed Glenleg, and instantly grasping the plaid of old Gordon with his left hand, as he drew his long biodag with the other, he seemed about to stab the reiver on the spot.

"Bastard! sayst thou, old man?" next cried Alaster, also bursting in among the crowd that grouped around, the dance being now completely interrupted. "Your pardon, chieftain," he added, putting up the arm of Glenleg; "it is *I* that ought to have the privilege of avenging the insult to myself and the earl. I have twice saved the life of this ungrateful cearnach, but it is now forfeited. Bastard! bah!" and drawing his dirk, while he grasped the reiver's throat, he held the weapon gleaming over his head.

His uplifted arm was again prevented by the bystanders, for the whole festivity, as was by no means unusual in the Highlands, had turned in an instant into a scene of terrible uproar; there being Gordons present, besides those that rushed into the hall on hearing of the quarrel, and there were M'Donalds, and Macleans, and Grahams, and Stewarts. And now a wild babel of loud Gaelic tongues sounded through the apartment. In another moment claymores and skene-dhus gleamed in the grasp of several uplifted hands; the lights plucked from the walls and carried towards the crowd in the centre served to show the glances of scorn or defiance that were thrown from many a swarthy countenance.

"Pieugh! Hieugh! Teevil almighty, taman her soul!" cried a well-known voice, somewhat profanely, as flourishing high his drawn claymore, and bursting into the middle of the crowd, Morrouch M'Combich became obstreperously conspicuous. "Cot tamn! will

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her nainsel's clory thrapple the auld man that marched wi' us through the wood, and will shentlemans stand by an' stick ane anither in the cuts in the laird's ha', when we're a' gaun to the pleasurements o' the wars an' rumours?—Oigh!"

"Who is this savage?" said the earl to Glenleg, his attention for the moment being completely diverted from the main fray by the odd manner of the intruder.

"Her nainsel be a shentlemans!" affirmed Morrouch, briskly answering for himself as he again brandished his claymore. "Cot be neist us! will your lordship's clory let the puir deer-stalker pody be worried like an auld tupe in him's nain castle! when shentlemans are marching like pleasant lambs to the clorification o' the wars o' Montrose?—Oigh! pieugh! let go her craig!" he shouted to Alaster, "or faith she'll split her wezon wi' her ain skene-dhu, tamn her!"

This ludicrous yet characteristic speech had a wonderful power over all present, at least it gave the fierce spirits of the Highlanders a moment for thought, a great advantage gained over those who are just about slaying each other; but while Alaster and the reiver stood respectively eying one another in their wrath, the attention of all was attracted by a third object. In short, close as the crowd in the hall which had swelled with the rising quarrel was, Highland gallantry, on the outside of the circle within which the earl stood, was displayed in readily giving way to facilitate the entreated introduction of Moina Gordon.

The electrical effect of the first words, and even of the simple presence of the Highland maiden, as she now stood like the angel of peace in the centre of the excited crowd, can only be conceived by those who have witnessed the power of woman over the rugged spirits of men. The very sound of her soft femmine voice, as, in the affecting tone of entreaty, and using the poetic phraseology of her native Gaelic, she begged for peace on all sides, and especially for protection to her father, was followed by a spontaneous murmur of assent and admiration.

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"Forgive, my lord," she said at length, kneeling at the feet of the earl, "excuse and forgive the hasty words of an ancient clansman, who, though forced by oppression to make for himself a den in the forest, like the hunted prey of the strong, and to seek a living like the fowls of the air, who build their nests unbidden in the green boughs of Braemar woods, cannot forget that he once held broad lands in the craggy isles of the west, or that proud blood flows in his veins. And, oh! if it please your lordship's honour, do not let this youth and him swear this bitter vengeance,—for in the wars of the Lowlands, to which they are going, heads enow will be laid low in the dust, though the brave sons of the mountains draw not their swords to sheath them in each other's bosoms."

"Rise, maiden," said the earl to her, in the most kindly tone. "There is more good sense in thy simple words than all of us together have now manifested, and a music in thy voice that well may move men from the most ruthless purposes. For *thy* sake, damsel, I will myself unsay my hasty words, for truly, though thou hast a rough and ill-mannered father, it were small disgrace, I think, to the proudest blood in my hall to be joined to such a gentle spirit as thine."

"And forgive, too, my angry threats, my lord," said Alester, also bending on his knee; "for though the language of the vindictive reiver, whom I have brought from the forest, is hard to bear, yet for this maiden's sake I am most willing to forget and forgive."

"Old man, see you that sight?" cried the earl, pointing to the kneeling pair, "shall I bless them both before you go to the wars, and promise them happy days together, and happier nights, when he returns from the Lowlands with victory and honours?—Say it, sullen carle!"

"No!" shouted the old man, his sharp voice sounding through the silent hall like the angry croak of a demon. "No! Earl of Mar. I shall never say it! Though the maiden is my own daughter, and the pride of my heart, I would sooner lay her head in the kirk-yard of Crathy than I would give her to the arms of

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the man who has brandished his weapon over me as my conqueror; no, Lord of Mar, there has blood been between us, and more is yet to flow. The steel is cold that divides us, and its fiery gleam only can bring heat again. Nay, frown not, lairds and chiefs, I am a Gordon, and my lost honour must be retrieved by blood, red blood! On the heath it must be spilt! I have seen it in my sleep,—my dreams are sanguine with it,—the spirit of vengeance hath spoken it.—The day of feud is to come, even if it should be to me and mine a day of bitterness and of wo."

The whole company were startled into a superstitious awe by the wild energy of this speech, and in the silence which followed, the fearful word *wo* was either repeated by some voice from the further recesses of the hall, or at least it echoed ominously from the vaulted roof above them. Its immediate effect upon the excited senses of the Highland maiden drew the attention of all who stood round. Rising up with hands clasped together, her uplifted eyes seemed to express a strange sentiment, and shot from them the lightning of intense mental distress, mixed evidently with the dark apprehensions of coming sorrow; when, shaking off the myrtle wreath that bound her yellow hair, and allowing it to fall over her neck and shoulders as she turned suddenly towards the astonished Alaster, she uttered something between a suppressed scream and a sob of sadness,—and while the bystanders made way for her on each side, she flung her long locks hastily behind her and rushed wildly out of the hall.

The crowd of men soon closed in, and a buzz of Gaelic voices, after the first silence, again rose round, for the seeds of some future feud seemed evidently to have been sown by the very example of a vengeful spirit set by the sullen deer-stalker. Whatever should be the end of the various controversies now raised among the guests in the castle, the evening festivity was completely disturbed; and during the confusion that prevailed, Alaster stole out to give vent to his feelings, and, if possible, to obtain a parting-word with Moina Gordon.

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CHAPTER X.

The buzz of mirth and homely enjoyment without the castle of Braemar was much greater and infinitely farther extended than the more dignified and passionate controversies into which the pleasures of the evening had now turned within its walls. The great beacon of the feast was still burning brightly on the lawn, its gnarled trunk not being yet entirely consumed, and its red light shone with enlivening effect upon the weather-beaten countenances of the hardy mountaineers, who sat in groups around it, telling their tales of local creach or superstition, or drawing imaginative pictures of the coming war. Various other fires burned in different places, on the slopes where the Highlandmen had been entertained; groups were dancing to the bagpipe near the bonfires, whose red light was reflected in the still waters of the Dee beneath; and the hum of festive enjoyment and universal occupation throughout the valley, or up behind the castle, with the different sights and sounds which struck the several senses of the observer, had an effect of picturesque and romantic confusion.

The mind of Alaster began to recover its composure, and even to partake of the general hilarity, as he wandered through this animated scene. He knew, however, that it was not in the crowd or among the dancers that he need seek for his enthusiastic Highland maiden. Turning up, therefore, towards the rear of the castle, he wandered musingly along the side of a small burn which issued from a narrow opening in the braes above, and before he had proceeded a few steps Moina Gordon stood directly in his path. About to speak to her familiarly as before, Alaster was awed by the elevation

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of her manner, as, stepping two paces back she prepared to address him.

"You have done me wrong, Alaster," she said in a tone of complaint, "you have done me much wrong, however unwittingly. It was not to exhibit myself with you in the halls of Braemar castle that I travelled through the forest after my captive father; and you know how reluctantly I was persuaded to be your partner in the dance, without time to ask leave of the chafed old man. But it is *I* who am to blame! Alas, that bitter imprecation! how it rings in my ears still! I must not hear you speak. I must not see you again. You have drawn your brand against my father to-night, in the face of your vow and your token; and his wild curse, in return, portends sadness and wo."

Alaster stood petrified by this striking summing up, and more by the elevation of manner with which it was delivered, unable for a few moments to offer a reply. "Your reproachful conclusion, Moina," he at length said, "follows an event which neither of us could have foreseen. It is not such as you who, being present on such a night as this, would have been allowed to keep aloof from the dance in the castle."

She only continued to look sadly in his face.

"Moina," he continued, "I had been no man could I have heard that hated word in silence. Yet, though I spoke in haste, I would not have touched a hair of your father's head. Will you not forgive me, Moina Gordon?"

She put her hand hesitatingly into his.

"Moina," he said, evidently suppressing his rising pride, "powerful is the feeling in my bosom towards yourself, that causes me to bear as I have done with that vindictive old man. Unworthy is he, methinks, of such a daughter."

"Alaster," she said solemnly, "that is not language that I can listen to. But if you have any feeling towards me, ah! let me entreat you that, for *my* sake, going as you both are to follow to the wars, when meeting together in the long march, or fighting side by side on the field of

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daughter, you will still keep your vow towards my poor father."

"So help me, Heaven!—but only for your sake, Moina."

"There is much sadness mingled with the happiness of this night," was her plaintive reply, "and something weighs heavy on my spirits, and still rings in my ears, as if it were the dread echo of my father's curse."

But few words more were spoken on either side; the reconciliation between them did not seem quite perfect, yet the bright eyes of the Highland maiden had evidently lost no portion of their lustre, as Alaster gazed on them by the red light of the sinking fires, and their final farewell was as soft, yet a thousand times more affecting, than the last long note of the shepherd's pipe, which is often heard at eve by the eager listener, as it sweeps down the wild glen in the solitudes of Inveronoch.

A dead silence and stillness soon spread over the hitherto busy scene on the slopes of Braemar, and reigned in the crowded stone-chambers of the castle, as the Gael of every degree refreshed themselves with a few hours' deep slumber to fit them for the morrow's long march. The mustering of the clans in the morning on the green lawn was exceedingly picturesque, though not quite so regular on this occasion as a review in Hyde Park is at the present day; nor was it without an amusing mixture of Highland swearing, clannish pride, clamour, and enthusiasm. The women of the neighbourhood, and others who had followed the "braw lads" thus far, were particularly troublesome to the leaders and chiefs, diverting greatly the attention of the men from their public duty, as the seductive sex have ever been accused of doing.

Of all the men of war who on this interesting morning were distracted by cares of this sort none was harder put to it than our valiant friend Morrouch M'Combich, who, having on the previous night picked up a dancing acquaintance with a tall kimmer of the glen, who professed to have known him years before (of which, however, the honest Highlander had no distinct

recollection), became so desperately loving towards the time of parting, that Morrouch's patience could hardly endure it.

"Ogh—oigh!—pless her pody, forby her sowl, Morrouch," simpered the wily kimmer, as she stuck to the skirts of the Highland hero, up and down; "an' so she's gaun to the great wars, an' the foes, an' the slaughter; an' maybe she'll ne'er come back to Braemar or Blair-Athol. Ochon, och, aree! puir Morrouch."

"Tuish, whisht!—pless her sowl too," whispered Morrouch hastily; "noo—there's my thumb, an' so gang to the glen, for here's the cornels an' the machors an' the doinuasals—an' the pipers are skirling on the trones—pieugh! let me gang, for we're aff this moment to the wars an' rumours."

"But what'll her nainsel pring me frae the Lowlans' when she comes pack frae the clories o' the wars?" inquired the persevering kimmer, with true Highland greed. "She maun pring her a plaid o' silk, an' a gown o' procade, forby a gowpen o' goold to fling in her lap, an' a forpet o' silver—an' oo'h put she'll pe a praw ledy then," added the kimmer, spreading out her petticoats to illustrate her meaning, "walking like a carline afore her nain door."

"Oogh, ay," said Morrouch, answering the unreasonable expectations of his jo with a "pleasurement" of Highland flattery; "she'll pe sure to bring her pags fu' o' goold an' mountains o' silver."

"An' a proach for her breast," rejoined the kimmer eagerly, "a shinkling proach as praid as the moon—an' grand rings for her fingers, an' shining puckles for her shoes, an' a whorl o' laumer peads for her neck. Oigh! put she'll pe a praw ledy then, when she's gaun afore Mass-John to be marriet."

"Oogh, ay, to pe surely," said Morrouch soothingly. "Noo, just gang doon the glen, for there's the lairds an' the cornals."

"An' are ye gaun to the wars an' the Lowlans, an' maybe she'll ne'er come pack ava. Hieugh! whee!"

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and the kimmer set up a Highland howl, and let fall a shower of mercenary tears.

"Whisht! hieugh! tamn her soul," growled Morrouch, quite afflicted with the woman's noise; "will she skirl there louder than Donald Dreigh's bagpipes! Hoot! haud her greet, Got tamn! an' gang hame, till an honest shentlemans march wi' a peace an' a pleasurement to the clory o' the wars an' rumours."

The warlike skirl of the bagpipes, as Morrouch irreverently, though somewhat truly, denominated the music of that melodious instrument, was now set up from so many quarters, that it was evident a general movement was about to take place, and the word being given from left to right, a coercive separation was effected between Morrouch and his lady-love, to the great relief of the valiant hero, who forthwith prepared himself for the proud sublimities of a real march to the wars. The whoops and hieughs in giving the word of command to the few musketeers whom the laird of Glenleg had been able to muster, as with great ostentation they were exercised under the adjutancy of a veteran Dalgetty of the day, would, along with the manner they were answered, be somewhat amusing could they be witnessed by the military elegantiarum of the Horse Guards of our times; but seemed quite astonishing and admirable to the general army of the Gael, who, trusting more to the broadsword than any other weapon, could hardly be persuaded even to handle the longbow and its arrows, which seemed cumbersome to carry across the hills, however well they might answer for bringing down the fox or the wild deer in the surrounding forests.

It was a gallant sight to the women and old people assembled in the neighbouring heights to witness this formidable squadron put in motion, though the whole, subdivided under many petty but proud leaders, did not amount to a thousand Highlanders. The short but loud word of command to the men, repeated in sequence by many consequential officers, with the succeeding bursts of bagpipe-music as the companies marched off,

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had a particularly pleasing and picturesque effect, answered as they were by the echoes from the hills; and now the whole moved towards the heights behind the castle, and were soon lost beyond their ridges or among the woods, while murmurs of grief at this last sight of their friends, and many blessings and prayers for safety, broke the stillness that again began to reign on the slopes of Braemar.

On a low knoll that skirted the forest sat Moina, alone, and watched the small company of the Gordons, that was led by her father, and a larger body, at the head of which appeared the tall figure of Alaster Graham, as they successively descended beyond the ridge and were lost to her view, with feelings that we need not describe. When all was over, and the green valleys beneath were again without an inhabitant, rising and joining a few of her people who waited at a distance, she proceeded silently back through the wood towards the deserted clachan of Glenskiach.

CHAPTER XI.

The fate of two or three individuals, through a series of incidents, in which we have had opportunity of slightly touching upon the ancient manners of the Gael, being all we aim at in our simple story, no further allusion to the historical events of the period is made than is absolutely necessary to the tracing of the main catastrophe, for the truth of which we have at least the veritable testimony of tale-telling tradition.

It was after the welcome reinforcement received from Athol and Braemar mentioned in the last chapter, that the Highland army who followed the fortunes of Montrose achieved in various parts of the north (before descending into the lowlands of Fifeshire and Stirling), those brilliant, but unsatisfactory exploits which are

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so well known in Scottish history. But if the campaign was glorious to those who count such things a glory, it was fatiguing and harassing to a degree that none but hardy mountaineers could have endured, and none but those who are acquainted with the nature of their rugged country can understand or appreciate. The victories of Inverlochy, of Alderne, and of Alford, the harrying of Argyleshire and the sacking of Dundee, could scarcely make up for the terrible toils encountered in climbing the bleak precipices of the west, in wading through drifts of snow among the mountains, during the depths of winter, where the poor Highlanders were often scarcely able to see the tops of each other's bonnets, or in starving for days together while manœuvring and retreating to avoid Baillie and Urry, on the barren braes of Badenoch. These scenes, and the incidents to which they gave rise, will long be remembered in interesting tradition, and continue to be sung in Scottish song; but it was a memorable revenge that Argyle took for the hasty harrying of his country, by plundering the estates of another aged earl; and while the picturesque ruins that mark the spot where these transactions took place are mouldering into decay, the wild and melancholy music of these glens will long commemorate the lamentable burning of "The bonny house of Airlie."—But to return to our tale.

Months had passed away, and the fitful rumour of the distant war had come in snatches of contradictory exaggeration and episodes of sad personal history, to the anxious ears of the few women and others still remaining in the deserted baille of Glenskiach, within the forest. But the battle of Inverlochy, fought comparatively in their own neighbourhood, brought consequences which the simple females of the wood could not have foreseen; and which carried sad anxiety at least to one interesting bosom. Some there were who had returned to the forest from the war without glory, and with hearts burning with envy and disappointment; and vows were heard by the solitary Highland maiden, uttered in fancied secrecy, and over dirks touched with

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blood, which horrified her simple feelings, and caused her ultimately to form resolves, such as love only could dictate, and noble enthusiasm only could undertake. In a short time after this, Montrose's army, with his Irish allies, again advanced from the north, on their march towards the Lowlands, and a second and more fatal scattering again took place of those who had hitherto dwelt within the woody solitudes of Braemar.

It was already the afternoon of a clear sunny day in spring, when a single youth, footing his way over the Highland hills towards Montrose's camp, on attaining a height on the eastern ridge of the wild mountains of Cairn Gorm, first obtained a distant view of the much-desired object of his solitary march. Pleasantly to the glowing fancy of the youth lay the white tents of the army—along the side of a stream in the green strath beneath him; and warlike did the whole array appear, however irregular in its fortified disposal, when, as he descended the hills, he could distinguish the red standard of Scotland's lion fluttering over Montrose's tent, and above the principal points of the encampment. A small but much-valued squadron of horse—which the care-worn leader of this ill-to-manage host had still been able to preserve attached to himself, were exercising with picturesque effect on the slope in front of the camp, and an irregular mass of sutler followers and their baggage hovered in a dense body among the cottages and in the woodland immediately in its rear. Pickets and scattered sentinels of the Gael guarded the exterior passes towards the stream, and this being a spot where Montrose allowed his wearied troops a few days of repose, a bustle of careless merriment seemed over the camp, and various groups of idling Highlanders lay basking on a bank in the afternoon's sun.

The heart of the stripling beat quick with pleasure as he surveyed all these stirring features of the war, of which he had often heard among the inland glens of Aberdeenshire, out of which he was now emerging almost for the first time. But as he looked abroad over the tents, his mind was occupied with emotions regarding

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some who he knew were there unconscious of his approach, that filled him with a multitude of mixed anxieties. What these anxieties consisted of will appear in the sequel; but as the youth had still a considerable space of hilly land to travel over before he could reach the camp, we will transfer our attention for a little to some of those engaged for the day on duty under Montrose, at a point which this young stranger was likely to pass.

Our old friend Morrouch M'Coubich had followed his gallant leader faithfully, and borne the brunt of the war bravely until this day: though he had done many deeds of arms for which he had been praised of course, and received many kind promises of preferment, which would no doubt some day be fulfilled, and though a perfect gentleman, like most of the Highlanders, yet had he never hitherto got further than the honourable station of a full private. This, however, being the complaint of many similar gentlemen,—the leaders of the expedition having a prejudice that the officers should not outnumber the men—Morrouch had, as yet, contented himself as he could; but it being his turn this afternoon to mount guard at a pass beside the stream, he was agreeably surprised to find in the person of his neighbour sentinel his old acquaintance Colin M'Crone, whom he had met at Braemar, still also in his original station, and when the whoops and whoofs of the formal corporal, who had left them at their post, had passed clean away, they took the opportunity of a little soldierly gossip, being now able to speak from experience about the pleasurements of the wars and rumours.

"Got pless us! Glory an' praise put she's glad to see her, Colin! Oigh, man! here, take a snuff o' the sneeshing," said Morrouch, offering the other with friendly animation a comforting refreshment for his nose "Pieugh! what for did she never see her afore in the wars?"

"Oigh! tamn her wars an' the pleasurements," said the other, sulkily. "Naething for the spuran (purse), an' little for the nose, put a long march an' a hungry

outs, frae Strathspey to Strathbogie. Feigh! tamn her wars!" he repeated, bitterly, and with a Highland grunt.

"Oigh! it's a meeserable greusome war to be surely," said Morrouch, his countenance lengthening to reciprocate the discontent; "her vera houghs an' hurdies are wauked wi' the cauld an' the weet, till her skin is as hard as a tanner's apron, an' her vera meat for her wame is naething ava but a starve an' a brust."

"But the spuitzie," said the other, comfortingly, "surely her nainsel got a claught o' the spuitzie, an' a birl o' the siller in the reiving o' Dundee, forby the harrying in the glens o' Argyle."

"Oigh! teevil a plack! tamn her conscience!" exclaimed Morrouch, chafed into spleen at the very thought. "No a silk nor a procade for the kimmer o' Braemar, nor a silver tester to her pouch the size o' a herring-scale, nor a taback for her cheek to pe a comfortment on the march; but a three day's hunger on the braes o' Badenoch, till her pelly be clapped to her pack like a Gyptian mummy—her nose be frozen amang the snaw, as red as her garters, an' the hairy dorloch on her puir shoothers as fu' o' wind as her toom wame;" and as the eloquent Highlander thus spoke, he laid his hand, with more pathos than elegance, upon that part of his body which according to the celebrated Roman fable had once occasion to make a sad complaint against its servant members.

"An' what'll she do when she goes to the Lowlands if she be sae prave?" inquired the other.

"She's no there yet," said Morrouch, winking an eye. "Teevil hauds me frae crossing the burn this vera night, an' marching back like a shentleman to the braes o' Blair Athol. Oigh! what a pleasurement to see Glenleg again, an' the braw kimmer o' Braemar."

"But if her nainsel gang to the Lowlands, maybe she'll pe made an offisher, or a corporal, or a machor, or maybe a captain—a whole captain, like Alaster Graham. Pieugh! she disna ken what a great man she may be in the wars o' the Lowlands."

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"Do ye really think sic a thoght o' me, Maister M'Crone?" said Morrouch, delighted, and willing to give Highland flattery in return for flattery, "an' I wadna wuss but the marcoss would himsel make a creat man o' you too, Maister M'Crone; for ye're a likely lad, an there's mony promotions in the armies, since that tamn'd auld rascal, Grumach Gordon the reiver, was clean kicked out o' the clariments o' the wars. Hieugh! an' maybe when she grows a captain, an' hersel a cornal, she'll get a silk an' a sattin in the Lowlands yet, an' a praw proach like the muin, to stick in the preast o' her gausey kimmer at Braemar. Hieugh! clorification!"

"Stand to your arms, Maister Morrouch! stand to your arms—here's a stranger just at the lines. Cot tamn! look at the chield,—her legs are but short, yet she's louped the purn like a shelty."

"The chield! did ye say," said Morrouch, scornfully, as he observed the stripling stranger who now approached, "a perfect callant; without a peard to her face or feile-beg to her hurdies, pieugh!—whoe coes there? shentlemans! speak the word o' the wars, or she's a tead man,—tamn her!"

"A friend," said the stripling, in a thin boyish voice, and the back of his hand laid to his bonnet, more with the grace of a lady's page than the manner of a soldier.

"The king or the covenant, this moment! afore she's shot like a plover," bawled Morrouch, with redoubled valour. "Colin, stand to your cuns an' face the enemy, hieugh!"

"The king, and the gallant Montrose," exclaimed the youth, boldly, and still approaching nearer. "I come to your camp as a volunteer to the wars."

"Clorifications! Oigh!" screamed the other with constitutional enthusiasm; "a praw poy, an' a clean leg like a chief's son, an' a sma' foot like a maiden; but no knee or a hough to be seen at the skin, like a mountain soger, although she has a bit sporan frae her waist," he added, surveying the youth from head to foot, and perceiving that he wore not the Gaelic kilt, or feile-beg

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or rather short petticoat, as the English call this picturesque relic of the Roman dress, but his limbs clad with the trews, or trousers of red-barred tartan—a privilege of costume upon which few would then venture. On his head was the low military bonnet, ornamented with a drooping black feather, which so well sets off a handsome face; a tartan short coat, in which the loyal red colour predominated, showed the youth's person to much advantage, particularly with the aid of the long Highland breacan or hunting-plaid thrown over the left shoulder, and twisted gracefully round the waist, —its fringed folds hanging partly in front and partly covering the biodag or dirk, whose silver-mounted hilt just peeped out under the plaid, and on the right thigh A short broadsword buckled on the contrary side of the youth showed, that though he had no pistol in his belt, he was as well equipped for the war as many others of the army were at that period.

"An' what'll her honour pe wanting in the camp o' the warriors, young man?" inquired Morrouch, with somewhat of a Bobadil manner, willing to magnify, as he ought, the high and responsible office of sentinel outpost. "Her nainsel daurna let her pass one foot into the great camp o' the king's army until she knows the why an' the wherefore; stand to your arms, Colin, my lad—hoop!"

"I want to see the Marquis of Montrose," said the youth, with a modest mixture of boldness and trepidation.

"Eagh! oigh! the marcess! the creat clory o' the marcess herself! *you* want to see the proud Montrose? pieugh, poy! it's a perfect impossiblement. She'll tak aff your head for the speaking o't."

"I will pass on into the camp, if you please," said the stripling, about to go on.

"Cot tamn!—will she offer to prave the king's sentry in her sin camp? What's your piziness, young man, and where do ye come frae?—petter answer me quietly, an' wi' a hale skin."

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"I come from the west, beyond Blair Athol, and my business is with the Marquis of Montrose."

"Frae the wast—beyond Blair Athol," repeated Morrouch, hastily, and then whispering to his neighbour as if he had made some great discovery. "An' what may her honour's piziness be wi' his clory the marcoss, if she'll tell her pleasurement?"

"My business I can only tell to the Lord Montrose himself," said the youth, becoming indignant at this idle parley.

"Then if she'll no tell her piziness, she'll gie the word o' the night," said Morrouch, clapping the butt-end of the long Spanish musket which the outposts of the camp were then allowed to carry, and standing bolt-upright in the most soldierly manner.

"I know no word," said the youth, simply; "besides, it is not night until the sun sinks much farther behind Ben-cruaghan."

"She disna ken the word! an' she comes frae the wast beyont Ben-Lawers? Hieugh! I see it as plain as a parsnip—a spy, a vile traitor spy, frae the crafty Argyle. I'll take her to Montrose this very minute—an' tell his lordship's honour how I fund her out. Oigh! her fortune's made for this—captains an' cornals——spuilzie and promotions. I saw wi' a corner o' my e'e, that this land-louping youngster had the very walk o' a spy—as she lap o'er the purn. Come awa, young man. If I dinna bring you to the marcoss's honour, my name's no Morrouch M'Combich."

After some further whispering with his comrade, about his meditated temporary breach of military discipline, away went Morrouch, accompanied by the stripling, chuckling over this mare's nest which he had just found, and thinking in his Highland ignorance, as the Lowland Scotch would say, but with perfect confidence, that this adventure was to be the means of his immediate favour and preferment.

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CHAPTER XII.

The camp of Montrose, like many other things in life, appeared to the stripling, who now was led through it, and saw it in detail, to much less advantage than when he had seen its picturesque effect from an elevated distance, as he descended the heights of Cairn Gorm. A part of the little army being quartered in the village behind, it was by no means extensive; the common tents, rudely formed, tattered, and dilapidated, bore all the marks of a long and toilsome campaign; the men, who wandered about, or were busily employed round several fires, cooking their evening meal, had, to our youth's fancy, an ill-appointed, if not haggard, look; and even the tent of Montrose himself, with the Scottish standard waving over it, which in the distance had had an effect so princely and imposing, now, when seen closely with its numerous strings and pins stuck in the ground, and its inelegant proppings and tawdry stripes of red and blue, appeared to the imaginative beholder absolutely mean as well as comfortless.

Yet when our youth turned his eyes from the rude conveniences with which this hardy army were obliged to be contented, and observed the veteran faces and proud bearing of many of the Highland chieftains and gentlemen, who walked in pairs, or stood in groups around Montrose's tent, and while he tried with cautious anxiety to obtain a sight of one particular individual, who might, he thought, be among them, their stern countenances, weatherbeaten as they were, and their warlike bearing, tended to raise his mind above the circumstantial, and to direct it to the moral greatness of what he saw around him. While occupied with these thoughts he found himself the gaze of the groups of officers near, and was awakened into attention by

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the characteristic parley of his conductor with the sentinels who stood without Montrose's tent.

"She has piziness wi' the marcess, an' she *will* see his honour's clory," said Morrouch,—"noo—what'll she say to that? an' here's her prisoner—cot taan't let her pass."

The sentinel, a Caithness man, seemed astonished at the southern Highlander's audacity, and without another word the elated and confident Morrouch pulling aside the hanging canvass of the tent, and pushing his companion with little ceremony within, in another instant both stood in the presence of the celebrated leader of the northern rising and terror of the Covenanters. Our youth had barely time to cast his eyes round the interior of the tent.

At a small folding table covered with papers sat Montrose himself. A number of arms, cloaks, caps, helmets, flagons, and travelling conveniences lay partly on the bare ground, and partly on a sort of temporary beaufet behind him, and a small couch of great simplicity of form occupied the opposite side of the tent While the impudent Morrouch, now somewhat chapfallen from the effect of his own forwardness, was making with corresponding servility a double Highland bow, the marquis, lifting his head from the papers before him, and throwing himself back on his chair, with much dignity, as he surveyed the intruders, asked Morrouch sharply what he desired of him.

"Your lordship's honour's clorification," began Morrouch, with a graceful supernumerary scrape of his foot, "was a shentleman sentry this pleased afternoon at the pass beside the pum, when up comes this poy wi' the preeks, an' wanted to come into the camp to your lordship's clory—but she couldna gie the password, nor naught else for a verification—an' so her nainsel found out that she was frae the wast, ayont Ben-Lawers, an' pecause she was sure that she was naething but a spy frae Argyle, an' a Covenanter repellion, she just brought her to your lordship's clory—thinking to be surely that her nainsel will get a promotion for her paine."

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"Very satisfactory, Mr. Sentinel," said the marquis, slightly smiling, and seeing at once through the matter, habituated as he was to the unreasonable claims constantly set up by his Gaelic followers. "Come you from Argyleshire, young man?" he added, addressing the youth.

"No, my lord—only from the neighbourhood of Braemar."

"I thought so. And your business with me?"

"Merely to join your lordship's army as a volunteer—but"—and the strange youth, hesitating, gave a look towards Morrouch.

"You may return to your duty, sentinel," said the marquis to Morrouch; "I shall keep in memory this service."

"Will it be a captain, or a cornal, or a sergeant-machor, that her mainsel will pe made?" said Morrouch, standing now bolt-upright for a last effort. "She would just like the assurement afore she gaes back; for it's no every day that she stands in the noble presence o' the great marcoss o' the wars."

"Return to your duty, sir," said Montrose, sternly, and turning towards the youth, while Morrouch, muttering a disappointed hieugh! and a "tamn her sowl" or two, made off towards his post beside the stream.

"Now, young man, speak freely," said the marquis.

"In wishing to join your lordship's army for the present," said the youth, "my chief object, I confess, is, by such humble efforts as I may have opportunity of, to prevent strife between certain persons who have lately left this camp and some who yet remain in it. If your lordship commands me, I shall state all I know, but the persons in question being related to myself, and those for whom I am interested, it may perhaps be unnecessary for me to explain further than, that the apprehended quarrel is connected with the recent dismissal or disaffection of certain men of the Gordon's clan, who are known in the neighbourhood of Braemar, and some of whom, having incurred your lordship's displeasure in the war, through the representation, as

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is alleged, of certain persons now in your lordship's camp,—a feud is held against the latter, and it is the bloodshed meditated in consequence that I am anxious to prevent."

"Your design is most laudable, and still more remarkable for so mere a youth," said the marquis, interested with the speech of the stripling; "but I confess I do not distinctly recollect the circumstance to which you allude. You will do well to be more explicit."

"It was, as I am informed, at the battle of Invertochy, that in the distribution of commands on the right and left wings of your army your lordship was pleased to appoint a young soldier to a post near the centre, which was supposed to be the right of certain of the Gordon's clansmen, and particularly of one of their chiefs, who, thinking himself injured, and looking with envy upon the good fortune of the young soldier I speak of—"

"His name?" said the marquis, interrupting.

"His name, my lord marquis, is—I believe is," said the stripling, hesitating, and colouring slightly, "Alaster Graham."

"Oh,—go on, young man, and speak up."

"Offended at the preference thus given over an ancient chief," continued the youth, "the latter and his men, when the attack began, rebelliously refused to draw a sword; and while the young soldier, for his bravery that day, was raised by your lordship to the command of a company, and is now called Captain Graham, Grumach of Braemar and several of his men were dismissed with disgrace. Is not this, my lord, a sufficient ground of feud between Highland gentlemen?"

"But that stubborn forest-reiver cannot mean to pursue his feud against one of my bravest soldiers while the war lasts?" rejoined the marquis. "If he do, and if he attempt to make disturbance in my camp, I shall cause his head to be—"

"Surely your lordship will consider that Grumach Gordon is an old man?" interrupted the youth, with

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such unconscious earnestness of manner as to surprise the marquis. "Your lordship will pardon my presumption," he added, checking himself; "but methinks, even as an humble volunteer in your army, I might, as the parties are known to me, be the means of preventing any hostile meeting between them, should your lordship grant me such liberty to pass and repass in the camp, as my own good intentions, and even my life, may answer for. This, my lord marquis," said the youth, with a manner that almost rose into nobleness, "this is my humble request."

"You are a very extraordinary young man," said the marquis, interested and prepossessed beyond accounting for, as he threw himself back, and cast a curious glance over the graceful figure of the stripling, who now stood uncovered in his presence. "Your request is granted. Go and come as you please while we tarry in this valley—for there is no treachery in your unsuspicious years, and no double-dealing in that impassioned look. Draw near, youth, for you must have a sign for your safety. When you pass the outposts of the camp at any time, should you be detained and questioned, whisper into the ear of the chief of the guard the single word *Cathrom-feisne*,* and that will guaranty my favour for you by night or by day.

"Go, youth," continued Montrose, after a moment's pause, "thou hast access to me, if necessary, at any moment. Would that older and wiser men around me had more of thy generosity and singleness of heart."

The obeisance of the stripling, as he left the tent, had in it the embarrassment of struggling feelings, evidently including gratitude and admiration of the gallant leader of the expedition, which further excited the interest of Montrose; and as he turned away his fair face to go, the eyes of the youthful mountaineer seemed to the observing nobleman to be blinded with tears.

* An expression well known among the Highlanders,—literally *the equal combat of the Fingallians*, who only asked a fair battle without favour.

CHAPTER XIII.

The sun had for some time sunk behind the range of mountains which sent up their peaky tops into the clouds far to the south and westward of Montrose's position, and gray evening was melting into indistinct shadows and brown masses the various romantic points of the open landscape round the camp, as the stripling, whose adventures we have now to trace, made his way through its western extremity. Still alone and anxious to avoid observation, he proceeded on behind the rows of tents, and, though a stranger, seemed at no loss as to the quarter on which his anxieties rested.

That small portion of the southern clansmen which, by the courtesy of war and in imitation of more regular troops, was sometimes called a regiment, and of part of which Alaster Graham, by the agreeable flattery of title, was now called the captain, was encamped on the right flank. The tent of our youthful centurion was easily distinguished from those of the common men around it by its superior size and the red standard which waved above it; which, though torn and rather awry in its position, still fluttered with all the ragged pride of northern independence in the cold breeze of the evening. The feelings with which the stripling looked towards that tent, and watched every figure whom he could distinguish near it, it is not our business now in so many words to explain.

Passing this tent, however, and proceeding towards the sentinel who was posted nearest to it beside the stream, our youth addressed to the man a few firm words in his native Gaelic; after which, retreating towards higher ground, he took up a position for himself on the dry bank under a rocky height, which served to protect the flank of the encampment. A young moon was already beginning to fling her indistinct beam over

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this softened portion of the Highland landscape; and, certain of his own intent, the youth seated himself on the bank, where, unloosing the folds of his hunting plaid, and throwing it around him to protect himself from the chill breeze which now blew in fitful gusts off the overlooking mountains of Cairn Gorm, he seemed prepared to wait for some expected event with all the patience of a solitary mountaineer.

Although a glance was cast occasionally towards the tent of Alaster Graham as well as over the busy scene throughout the extent of the camp, and a low sigh would sometimes escape the bosom of our youth, while he sat on the knoll, his general attention was given entirely to one direction of the surrounding prospect. As the slender moon above, frequently obscured as it was by the coming clouds that flitted uncertainly with the breeze over this stormy northern sky, occasionally shone out with charming brilliancy on the sloping level between the stream we have mentioned and the hills beyond, the youth as he watched ever and anon kept his eye on the plain and on the mouth of a narrow gorge, or pass in the mountains through which he had himself come to the camp on his way from Braemar.

Quite prepared for a lengthened watch, or for resuming it again on the succeeding day, the youth still kept his eyes turned towards the gorge in the hills, yet sometimes glancing round to Alaster's tent, when, apparently to his own surprise, he already observed two men issuing from the direction of the pass. The strangers, coming forth, proceeded straight across the plain, towards that part of the camp which he immediately overlooked, and this before he had sat half an hour upon the bank. Refixing his plaid in military fashion, and slowly descending from the heights, the youth addressed a few words again to the sentinel, and then went forward to throw himself in the way of the coming strangers.

"It's a fresh night and a blasty, Sir Warrior," said the first of the men (if we may be allowed to translate what was spoken in Gaelic) to our youth, as he walked

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to and fro with seeming carelessness near the sentinel. "But it's kindly weather and favourable for the campaign," continued the speaker, trying to bespeak favour for his own design; "the evening piobrachd has not yet sounded through the valley, and perhaps we can have admission into the camp, as we are also for the king and the gallant Montrose."

"Mean you to join the army on the march to the Lowlands, gentlemen?" inquired the youth sharply.

The two men looked at each other as if uncertain what reply to make. "No," said the second, stepping forward and speaking with blunt boldness; "we merely would speak with an officer of your camp,—one Alaster Graham. Bring us to him, youth, if ever you expect to be a laurelled soldier."

"Know you so little of the orders of our general as to make such a request of the officer on the outposts?" said the youth readily; "my life would answer for such a dereliction of duty. But if you have any message for Captain Graham, such as a soldier may carry to his comrade, I will answer for its safe transmission."

"You are a gentleman, I perceive, young sir."

"I may not be called aught else, or be scorned with impunity," said the stripling proudly, and slapping with his hand the basket-hilt of his broadsword; "'*Nemo me impune lacessit*,' our Scottish motto, that is embroidered on the standard which floats above these tents, is also mine."

"You can carry a message then of honourable quarrel," said the man, stooping down and speaking in the stripling's ear with hoarse animation,—"a challenge, youth! a challenge to fight! on the sward of Strathfeagan. Tell Alaster Graham!—tell him that Grumach Gordon, whom he knows well, sends him his glove of battle and his bitter defiance—are you afraid, boy?" added the man, throwing back his head while he grasped the arm of the youth, and discovering by the dim moonlight the ferocious features of John of Leask. "Ha! you have never yet seen blood spilt—but there *must* be blood! heart's blood! Alaster Graham and two

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of his friends are challenged to the combat with the same number in the next glen; tell him the message, youth, as you are a gentleman."

"And does his wrath burn so hotly that he cannot stifle its flame till the war is over?" said the stripling, shrinking instinctively from the ruffianly glance of the man's eyes.

"Not a day!—not an hour, if it were possible," croaked John of Leask; "and *I* also am included in the deep injuries of Grumach Gordon, who is now watching our return under the hill behind. Youth, officer of the night, we send the challenge and defiance *by you*."

"And dare you try to make me the bearer of *treason* and provocation?" said the stripling, his self-possession now completely recovered. "Think you that we were unaware of your treasonable and unreasonable hatred against the bravest soldier in a camp where all are brave? Ho, sentinel, there!—come hither! I desire you to state before these strangers the private orders to the outposts of the camp."

"That a treasonable design being suspected," said the sentinel, after an instant, "to introduce private feud among the army, and in particular to offer vindictive provocation to the gallant Captain Graham, it is the marquis's orders that no one be admitted into the camp, and no message whatever be received anent such feud; and that shaft or bullet be not spared against any who may persist in attempting to forward such broil and brulzie."

The two strangers looked at each other in astonishment, upon finding that their design was known in the camp.

"And *I* am here to see these orders executed," said the youth, boldly, as he stood out in the moonlight. "Go back whence you came, men of Braemar! and learn that the brave lords engaged in this noble cause know both how to protect the honour and save the blood of their best officers."

"Then I leave with you, youth, the eternal defiance both of Grumach Gordon and John Gordon of Leask,

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against the upstart forester, Alaster Graham," said the challengers; "and hear you—my curse and ban upon his constant good fortune!" Saying this the implacable reiver and his companion turned to depart, and leaping the stream, they at once made their way back towards the mountains.

Our outpost stripling, somewhat agitated by this scene, was still standing in the same spot after the departure of the strangers, watching the shadows of the receding men in the moonlight as they proceeded, with all the speed of those who were anxious to deliver their tidings, across the pleasant level before him, when his attention was roused by the tread of feet near; and the approach of a file of men to change the sentinel caused him instinctively to shift his position, and to retire again upwards towards the bank.

Seating himself here once more, to consider what next he should do, unromantic nature in the shape of her common wants, which the anxieties of the evening had hitherto caused him to neglect, now came over the heart of our youth with clamorous urgency; and the enthusiastic volunteer of unknown wars began to be exceedingly at a loss how to procure a meal for his hunger. As for rest, that was easily arranged in a dry night; for the heath on the crag was remarkably soft, the lee-side of the height was most comfortably warm, and the plaid he wore was an ample covering as he lay on the heath under "the sweet heavens," for this roving mountaineer. But his light store of barley-cakes had long been exhausted, and being unable to crop like a kid the fragrant herbage of the bank, he, in spite of his anxiety of mind, began to look wistfully towards the fading fires of the camp, as he thought of a necessary refreshment.

As he again sat up ruminating on all things likely in his circumstances, the sound of the night piobrachd came pleasantly over his ear from the midst of the camp, which the gallant pipers before Montrose's tent, much prouder men than the leader of the host himself, made to "skirl" with warlike wildness up the valley

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of Strathfeagan. Music, however rude, if the composition of nature, is a sure awakener of poetic emotions and sad yet pleasing recollections of the forest of Braemar were beginning to steal over the fancy of the youth, when his regretful cogitations were disturbed by a measured tread of steps mounting the knoll on which he rested. In two minutes more the sentinel from whom he had recently parted stood before him, and touching his bonnet in military fashion, intimated, in two words, that his presence was earnestly requested within the tent of Captain Graham.

The very sound of the name caused a start and an emotion in the bosom of the youth—he hesitated at first, and would have excused himself, but the request seemed so nearly akin to a command, that refusal would evidently have excited suspicion. Occupied with various thoughts which need not be explained, the stripling, rising and adjusting his plaid and his sidearms, instantly followed the sentinel towards that tent which he had so often watched in the early part of the evening.

When the canvass was drawn aside which opened into the interior of the tent, Alaster was discovered seated pensively beside a chest, which, elevated on some logs, served for a table; a burning splinter of pine wood, fastened to the spike of a steel target that lay on the chest, served for a candle or torch, and showed the usual confusion of arms, accoutrements, and simple conveniences required by an officer of Alaster's condition. By the wavering and spitting glare of this light, the youthful features of the captain, surmounted by his dark locks, appeared handsome and expressive as ever, but thin and tinged with gravity; and the air of dignity with which he rose on the entrance of the stranger, with other circumstances of consciousness on the part of the latter, made the stripling disposed to shrink into the obscurest corner of the tent.

"Not knowing to whom I am indebted for your well-meant service, young sir," Alaster said, rising, "I have begged of you to come to me, and explain the reason of a zeal as singular as it is unobtrusive. Whatever

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may be the source of this attempted challenge, of which I have just heard, a soldier may not with honour to himself approve of its being turned from him. Pray speak, youth: I shall not be ready to blame so gallant a stripling."

"'Twas not for your sake only, sir—it was for the sake also of—"

"Heavens—what is this? Do I hear aright? can this really be the voice that has ever been music to my ears. Moina!—my sweet, heroic Moina! I should know you in spite of the most artful disguise that ever masker invented. And think you," he added, coming forward, and taking her shrinking hand, "you could by those dark locks hung over your own yellow hair, and by this warlike and boyish artificial costume, conceal yourself from me? Nay, blush not, nor look reproachfully on me for discovering you by that soft voice that so often charmed me in the forest of Glenskiach. I *will* speak now in the warmth of my heart, when my heart's love, who is ever in my thoughts, comes to refresh my spirit, amid the toils of the camp, and the harassing scenes of remorseless war."

"Oh, Alaster!" she said, all the woman now melting in her voice, and into the tears that acknowledged his grateful caress, "had you heard the bitter vows against you that *I* have heard, and suffered the anxiety that I have suffered, both I confess on your account and that of my hot-tempered father, you would excuse the adoption of this unseemly disguise, and forgive the forwardness of a lonely maiden, who has no friend to act a manly part for her: no one who will step forth to prevent those who are dearer to her than her own life from imbruing their hands in each other's blood, and from leaving her to sing the orphan's or the widow's lament of dool and dolour amid the deserted wilds of Glenskiach."

As she spoke a paleness overspread her features, her plumed bonnet fell from her hand, a faintness had come over her feminine heart, from the agitation of the interview and the long want of refreshment, and to his great embarrassment she seemed ready to swoon at his feet

Unwilling to call for assistance, he sat her down gently on a seat, and by means of such simple cordials as he had at hand at length recovered his agitated Highland maiden, who looked more charming as the colour again returned to her cheek, and as he succeeded in soothing her modest feelings into forgetfulness of her unseemly disguise.

Calling in his servant Farquhar, who, notwithstanding his peering curiosity, could make out nothing of who was his master's guest, such refreshment was procured as the camp afforded, and never did a meal eat more sweetly than this, that was partaken by those two in Montrose's camp. As she sat opposite to him, by the military chest on which their simple refreshment was set, her ruddy fair face contrasting oddly with the dark locks with which she had disguised it, and her animation returning with the enjoyment of his society, she explained how that she had travelled on foot to the town of Aberdeen, to purchase her present disguise, by which she had been enabled to get into the camp; and how that John of Leask, the most untameably ferocious of all the exile Gordons, continually stirred up her father to the seeking of that revenge which otherwise he might have been persuaded to forego.

In such discourse did our young soldier and the Highland maiden enjoy each other's society for more than an hour, and never did lovers sit alone in the night-watch with more chaste and heart-relieving happiness. Much gentle argument passed between them on the subject of the maiden's anxious fears for the safety of both Alaster and her father, to which was opposed his perfect confidence in his good fortune and his own strength and dexterity, should circumstances again force him to meet the reiver-chief in unwilling hostility. Praising Moina for her adroit management in warding off a challenge which his honour would have obliged him to accept, whatever might have been the consequences, Alaster succeeded in persuading the anxious maiden out of her fears; and representing to her simplicity the danger as well as indelicacy of her remaining

longer near the camp in her present disguise, he advised her to leave the whole matter to Providence and his own good sword, and instantly to return to her people in Braemar, at which place he hoped soon again to meet her, when he came back from the plains of the Lowlands, with those honours and rewards which ever are the recompense of the brave.

Many pleasing anticipations of joys to come,—not, however, without that intruding pang of indefinite apprehension which so often in this world casts a cloud over our dearest visions of future bliss,—followed in the bosom of Moina this sanguine speech of the mountaineer soldier; and the hour for changing the sentinels being now at hand, she rose to take her departure. Dwelling still, however, as the youth accompanied her without, upon the delicious illusions of their several fancies,—when they should live together as married lovers have lived, and roam together among the romantic valleys of Braemar,—they soon arrived at the craggy height where she had formerly rested; and when they came to the burn or streamlet which bounded the camp, so that their final parting was at hand, standing at opposite sides of the stream, in the dim moonlight, and kissing the tokens of gold which hung at each of their bosoms, they blessed one another in the sight of Heaven, and prayed for His protection until they should again meet in joy when the war was over.

At they separated at length—on Moina's part with a sigh of mingled hope and apprehension, and on the part of both with all the lingering reluctance of lovers,—Moina, however, secretly resolved, that notwithstanding the youth's confidence in himself, she would, retaining her present dress, tarry in the neighbourhood for a few days longer, until the army and Alaster had fairly marched from the valley of Strathfeagan.

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CHAPTER XIV.

The day succeeding the night-scene sketched in the preceding chapter was one of that sad and gloomy character which even in the hilly north, where such days are comparatively common, had its effect upon the spirits of the hardy mountaineers, now lying inactive in this ill-appointed camp. The gusty breeze of the previous night had died away, and the morning rose with a gray and sullen gloom. A heavy rain, which fell during the night, completely drenched the mossy ground on which most of the tents were erected. Neither hill nor mountain was to be seen, and the dense fog, which scarcely enabled those in the centre to discern the boundaries of the camp, dropped a soaking "weet" the whole of the day, while an unwholesome thickness was in the air, and a threatening blackness hid the sky.

The state of the atmosphere, operating at first by a slightly disappointing feeling upon Montrose himself, from some plans he had formed for the day, began, as the afternoon advanced, to have a more serious effect upon him, causing a train of thought such as *will* obtrude upon the most vigorous minds; particularly if, like that of this gallant but unfortunate warrior, a dash of poetic elevation may help to ennoble it, while it opens to its more acute perceptions a thousand sources of inward suffering. Though continually successful, and now partly on his way towards the richer valleys of the Lowlands, victory itself had not yet reconciled the marquis to the irreparable loss of his gallant companion Lord Gordon; and the uncertainties of life, of success, and of fame struck upon his heart on this particular morning with ominous impression; as if an involuntary revelation had been made to him of his own ultimate fate. Numbers of his men, as usual, had deserted him,

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for the time, after the battle of Alford; the clans that subsequently joined his standard, when he descended into the plains, had as yet given him no indication of their favourable intentions; and the thick mist of this dull day hid from his anxious observation even the dim outlines of the distant hills, down which, if nothing unfortunate had happened, ought now to be descending an important reinforcement.

But the whole day passed gloomy and uncomfortable, and no intimations came of the expected clansmen. The discomfort of their situation, as they lingered unemployed in the midst of an unsheltered and marshy strath, began to affect the minds of the eager Highlanders; and towards evening their impatience to be gone to the south became audible to their officers in sullen and ill-suppressed murmurs. This feeling of discontent Captain Graham himself began to partake of in a way for which he could not account, particularly in the latter part of the day, and as evening gathered round in thick obscurity over the cloudy mountains of Cairn Gorm; for that melancholy which had gradually been approaching his mind all day, buoyant as it had been by the thoughts of his Moina, fell now with involuntary heaviness over his heart, as if some coming event was casting its dark shadow before, and as if the very air which he breathed, and the low whisperings of the wind which now came sighing down the valley, while the dim moon began to rise in the stormy sky, meant to warn him of some approaching evil.

As the succeeding night advanced, the breeze greatly and unexpectedly increased, and was heard to moan with an *eiry* expression through the scattered birch-wood behind the camp, or to swirl in gusty thuds through the passes of the hills; but from the comparative calm in the camp itself, it seemed that the storm was raging in the upper air only, and driving the clouds speedily towards the ominous airt of the Lowlands. Then strange and solemn thoughts would cross the mind of Alaster, as he gazed athwart the dim plain, and the dread fancies of the invisible world seemed to gather

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round him, which, either in their secret joy or their indefinite apprehension, hallow the visions of superstition by connecting them with immortality, and give ignorance itself a body and a use, if not even a pleasure, which knowledge, with all her flatteries, often fails to communicate. Whether it was the dim Bodach-Glass of the moonlight that haunted his spirit this strange night, or the inexplicable Twaish or second-sight of the Gael, that pointed its airy finger into the vista of futurity, Alaster thought he saw himself far away in the Lowlands, and Moina Gordon sitting solitary in the wilds of Braemar, musing sadly and anxiously concerning him—watching every rumour of the war that came from beyond the Grampians, and praying for his safe return as only a maiden prays for him she loves, until a sad foreboding began to cling to his fancy, that the dark form of destiny had interposed between them, and that he was never more to see her in life.

But the shrill and stirring sound of the piobrachd of the night, as it struck up its warlike note in the bosom of the camp, and mingled in the distance with the stormy breeze of the hills, awaked him from his revery; and presently after the tall figure of a man, who, wrapped in his plaid, had been strolling meditatively alone behind the tents, came close up, and seemed to wish to address him. Alaster stepped forward, impressed by the dignified bearing of the figure, and instantly was saluted by the Marquis of Montrose himself.

A few short sentences passed between them, in which the marquis complimented the courage and conduct of his youthful officer, and alluding with pride more than with blame to the impatience of his men to be led forward to the Lowlands, and to his disappointment of the expected reinforcement, for which he had vainly looked the whole of the day, added, rather abruptly,—

"Graham, you know the passes of these mountains; at least you can tell the route by which the Macalisters are likely to come?"

"I do, my lord marquis," said the youth, proud of the confidence with which he was treated; "and what

knowledge I lack can well be supplied by the gilly who has attended me throughout the campaign, should your lordship honour me so far as to allow me to start forth from this valley so soon as daylight breaks, to reconnoitre from such points in the hills as we are acquainted with, and bring you the first tidings of the Macalisters' coming."

"You shall go, sir," said Montrose, pleased with the ready zeal of Alaster; "and I doubt not good tidings shall sit on your brow before the day is far spent. But whom else will you take with you? for I am told you have enemies, who may be in this very neighbourhood. That volunteer stripling who lately joined us in the camp shall accompany you, if his youthful limbs are not too delicate for climbing the steeps of Cairn Gorm. Apropos, Mr. Graham, where is he? I have not seen him all day."

"He is, my lord marquis, I believe—" said Alaster, slightly confused—"but excuse me, it were unnecessary to take him to the hills."

"And is he then not in the camp?"

"No, my lord."

"Graham," said the marquis, after a moment's thought, and laying his hand familiarly on Alaster's shoulder, "something from the first struck me about that handsome volunteer, that I could not explain to myself—I see it all now. Nay, disguise it not, though you could; 'tis a soldier's fortune to love and be loved. The pretty stripling in the bonnet and trews was a woman!"

"I confess it was the case, my lord," said Alaster, after a short pause of deliberation; "but I was not the encourager of the maiden's adventure, nor, suffer me to say, has the affair aught to do with my duty to your lordship and my king."

"Alas! young man," replied the marquis thoughtfully, and stepping back while he surveyed Alaster's person,—various matters in his own experience at the moment crossing his recollection, "how little know you of yourself if you think that the affairs of the heart have nothing to do with our ambitions and our aims!

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Mr. Graham," he added, "upon second thoughts, it may be better that you should not leave the camp; a meaner messenger can effect this service, and I have too much to do for you in fair strife, when we get to the Lowlands, to allow you to run any risks among these hills."

"My lord marquis," said the youth, with animation, as his hand caught the basket head of his claymore, "may I not be trusted with my own defence, after the honour your lordship has deigned to confer upon me? Besides, it would be doing me an obligation to allow me to relieve your anxieties, instead of remaining thus inactive in the camp."

"Then do as you will," said Montrose, "but at least take two men to accompany you, and if you see the Macalisters or the Macalpins from the summits of Cairn Gorm, return at once; but you may advertise me of your tidings, by causing your servant to blow a blast on your forester's horn, when you come to the brow of that hill above the stream."

"All the camp shall hear it, and all the valley shall echo it," replied Alaster, with pride, "from Beantanard to Glenbourhagan."

"Farewell then, Captain Graham," said the marquis, kindly, "and whatever befall you within or without the camp, remember that I hold your life and safety in no slight value."

The weight that had lain on Alaster's spirits all day was dispelled for a time by this interview with his brave chieftain. In spite of himself, however, it returned again when he had retired to rest, and as, unable to sleep, he lay and listened to the low moaning of the wind, which swept down the valley, and its buzzing sound as it whistled round the tent over his head, and thought again of his Moina and of the romantic glens of Braemar. Anon sleep would come over him indefinitely, although he thought he was waking, and dim forms appeared to his superstitious fancy to hover round his low couch; and then, in the changes of his dream, Moina Gordon seemed to breathe upon his cheek, as she did on that night when she first loosed

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the thongs that bound him, while she smiled seductively as at first. But again their fond whisper seemed to be interrupted by the brattle of the red-deer rushing past among the boughs of the forest, and then the loud slogan of the Gordons came echoing, as he thought, from the inner coiries of the glens, and the flashing eyes of Grumach, her father, seemed to glare upon him; but as he continued to gaze on the angry countenance of the old man, his gray hairs gradually dropped off, and, to his horror, a grinning scull supplied its place,—and then weeping and lamentation rose on the night-wind, and the piercing coronach boomed wildly in his dreaming ear; and while he seemed to listen to the sound until he almost wept on his hard pillow, the forms melted away into confusion, till all was lost in deep but uneasy sleep.

CHAPTER XV.

The broad rim of the morning sun was barely peeping over the summit of Benheugh, and throwing his gleaming rays along the sloping valley of Strathfeaghan, as Alaster and his men—that is, Farquhar and Morrouch M'Combich—leaped the small streamlet that bounded the straggling camp of the Highland army, and set forth upon their reconnoitring expedition. The plain over which they next passed was better for travelling than Alaster had expected, for the wind had dried the ground considerably; the present morning was fair and sunny, and the fancies of the night having been dispelled by the cheering light of a new day, the travellers footed their way towards the hills with all the delighted agility of mountaineers, and feelings which reminded them of those happy mornings bygone when they had so often gone out to the sport in the interesting wilds of Braemar.

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The long valley of Strathfeaghan, with the crowded tents of the army, soon lay like a small green stripe beneath the travellers, as the three mounted the hills like goats, and scrambled their way through the rugged passes towards those points in the mountains that enabled them to overlook the glens beyond. At length as the day advanced, and as they drew near to a pleasant brow of soft green furze, Morrouch began, as usual, to feel an uncommon gnawing about his stomach, and thought it full time to remind his leader, that although when a man became a gentleman, he seemed also to acquire the faculty of living without food, yet that that was an attribute which it did not seem likely that he should ever acquire. Alaster, however, having kept Mr. Morrouch at much distance since he had come to his dignity, the latter was obliged to have his words well ordered and few when he dared to speak to the captain.

"Pleasurement, your captainship's clorification," said Morrouch, as he came forward with the back of his hand to his bonnet, and meaning to be exceedingly polite, as well as to speak his best English—"there's a bread an' a cheese in the wallet, and a drap o' Jock Barleycorn's bluid in the searrag; the bannocks I've brought frae the clachan are capital gude for the hungerment o' the hills; and as for the usquebaugh, its a perfect sin no to drink it just on this pleasant spot—for ye see, begging your excuses for the freedom o' the parley, to tell you the naked truth, captain, whatever may be your honour's case, my stomach is no' made o' pat-metal, and I *must* eat."

"Deevil pe in your craving wame," said Farquhar, pulling the impudent remonstrant aside, "canna ye wait till the captain gie us the word o' the fuglement. Never heed her croaking pelly, your honour's pleasure," he added to Alaster, "ye may just be used by this time wi' Morrouch's grumbling cuts."

"Truly, lads, the belly is a beggar that sometimes will take no denial," said Alaster, entering into the humour of his petitioner, "particularly when he is carried

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over mountains like these, the air of which makes him more clamorous than it is always convenient to satisfy. But it is well that you have not forgotten the provant, and if you'll just wait till we get to the brow of the heights yonder, I shall myself be glad to break bread with you."

"Hieugh! pless her honourable clory," exclaimed Morrouch, snapping his fingers, and running towards the brow of the pass. "I kent her pleasurement wadna starve the puir lads on the march, as lang as there was a bannock in the pouch, or a prochan-making o' meal in the poke—pieugh! Farquhar, boy, her maister'll soon gar her book the bag, for a' her stinginess."

A brisk foot-trot of a few minutes brought them all to the upper end of the pass, where, on an inviting bank of soft heath and herbage they sat themselves, and many a good "whang" of their homely bread and other provant served to stay that pleasantest of healthy appetites; and with the pungent seasoning of a hearty dram of the pure cordial of the Highlander, administered from the searrag, to add caloric to their necessary draught of the cold spring that dribbled from the rocks, made a meal more sweet to the three mountaineers than is often eaten off gold in the halls of the south.

"Whisht! gie her a pardonment—please her honour," exclaimed Morrouch, as he bolted the last indifferently-masticated mouthful;—"huish—did ye na hear a sound?"

"What sound?" said Farquhar, surlily, beginning to be jealous; "what'll she pe hearing noo? just as if she had a langer lug than her petters."

"I'll swallow the steel sken-ocle on my hip like a cheese-paring," he added, jumping up, "if I didna hear a piper's piobrachd doon the glen. Oigh! it'll be the Macalisters, as sure's a gun."

The party all rose and followed Morrouch towards a shelving point on the height; but though they sometimes imagined they heard the reedy sound of the bagpipe coming on the breeze from the far distance beneath, as yet they could see nothing of any approaching band.

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As they went forward, however, and valley and glen spread out successively beneath them, the sight of his native hills in the distance, together with the effects of the exhilarating refreshment, made Morrouch quite wild with delight, and sometimes screaming with joy, he became almost unmanageable.

"Oigh! plessings and clories!" he exclaimed to his servitor companion; "what would she gie to set her feet on the gowan that grows this yera morning on the braes o' Apine, or even adown the bonnie howms o' Braemar! I say, Farquhar, my man, speer at her honour's captainship, if we may take a start athort the braes, just to get a smack o' the braw kimmer that wends ayont the castle—hieugh! if I just had her in my oxter this precious minute."

"Face about and turn to the left, lads," said Graham, as they came to the angle of the mountain. "There is no appearance of the Macalisters, at least from this point, and we must take the other pass in our way back towards Strathfeaghan, for be our tidings what they may, we must take care to be in camp again before sunset."

"Och! och! hear ye that, Farquhar, lad?" said Morrouch, chapfallen, as he reluctantly complied with the unwelcome order. "Och—och! I see it as plain's a parritch, she maun joost turn her back on the bonnie Highland mountains, like a banishment,—for she's gaun to the Lowlans to get her death, and she'll never see the kimmer o' Braemar ony more."

The pathetic sentiment uttered by the honest Highlander was not confined entirely to himself or his servitor friend. Even he who gave this command complied with it, in his own person, with a feeling of regret and disappointment. That feeling was deepened as he continued to walk on in silence; and now the afternoon began to lower, and a gray mist to overspread the sky, while the bare and bleak hills among which the party travelled began next to assume that solemn hue, in their purple and sterile wildness, which communicates its tinge of poetic melancholy to the imaginative mountaineer of the dismal north. The involuntary

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suggestions of the foregoing night again came across the thoughts of Alaster with a sort of prophetic sadness; his mind became acutely sensitive with its own reflections, until the very rocks that frowned over his head, and the glens and ravines that winded beneath the narrow passes along which he encircled the wild mountains, seemed to send up strange whisperings to his ears, or at least to his fancy.

At length Alaster and his followers came to the point from which he was to have sounded his horn, had he obtained a sight of the expected reinforcement, but this spot he was obliged to leave behind him without any note to announce his approach to the camp. They soon after descended into a little glen which terminated in the gorge that led to the plain where Montrose's army lay. Following the course of the brook which winded along the bottom of the glen, while he mused on the ill success of his day's adventure, Alaster cast his eyes accidentally towards the rocks beyond the brook, when he perceived three men whispering together quite near him, and proceeding as if to intercept his passage through the gorge. A hasty exclamation broke from his own men on their observing this; and a second glance served to show him the stern and imbrowned countenances of Grumach Gordon, John of Leask, and another well-known reiver from Glenskiach, whom Alaster could not name. Perceiving that they were observed, old Gordon took a few racing steps down the bank, leaped the stream, and was instantly followed by his two companions, who, with himself, had been dismissed with disgrace from Montrose's army, and now seeming to rejoice in the success of their watchful lodging of the youth as he returned, by which they expected to gratify their burning thirst for revenge.

A sensation very unusual to his bold and buoyant spirit shot through the mind of Alaster, in the mood he was, on observing this. Casting his eyes from the savage countenances of those who stood before him, round upon the silent and lonely glen in which they were, he felt as if the saddening fancies which had oppressed

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him all the previous day and night were now in some manner about to be realized. But there was no time for reflection. The father of his Moina stood here in his path, pale with long-treasured malice,—his eyes flashing with rage and the anticipation of immediate revenge. Before Alaster came quite near to the men, three long claymores already gleamed in the red rays of the sinking sun, which ominously seemed at the moment to be withdrawing his light from the glen.

"Draw you three swords against one man, gentlemen?" said Alaster, quietly, as he came up. "This looks warlike, and somewhat hasty in such a spot as this."

"Are there not three of you too?" said Grumach Gordon, answering in Gaelic, with a triumphant scowl; "ard is not the green sod as good in one place as another to settle a bitter quarrel upon?"

"The quarrel is of your seeking, not mine, Grumach Gordon," said Alaster, in his usual calm tone; "and you wrong yourself as well as me, in thus pursuing me with a vengeful spirit, for I have never injured you."

"Hah!—never injured me!" repeated the old man, as he exchanged looks with John of Leask. "Hear you this insulting speech of my mortal enemy?—but he is no true man, and fears to meet me on a fair field, for all his boast and his glaumorie. I see it now well, audacious youth," continued the reiver, rising in wrath, "when the devil with whom you deal, and who has hitherto given you the victory, deserts you under the broad light of day, you dare not face me—you are a coward!"

A pang passed through the heart of Alaster as this intolerable expression was uttered, and as he observed the triumphant sneers of the other Gordons; but he remembered his vow to the gentle Moina, renewed so recently in his own tent, and felt the gold token at his breast, as if it burned over his heart. "Grumach Gordon," he said, "I am an officer in the service of my country; I charge you in the king's name to let me and my followers pass to the camp in peace."

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"May my good claymore be broken over my head, and may I be proclaimed a coward like yourself, if I have not a fall with you ere we part, on this very sod; and if I see not your blood reeking on my blade this night, though my own life should be the forfeit!"

"Old man," said Alaster, solemnly, "I bear from you what I would bear from no man. I offer you peace and conciliation. I charge you for your own sake, whose blood I would not willingly spill, for the sake of your gentle orphan daughter, to think what you do."

The mention of this word, *his daughter*, seemed to rouse the old man's rage beyond endurance. "Villain! viper! scoundrel!" he exclaimed. "You have stolen my daughter from me—you have bewitched and decoyed by your arts the child of my bosom—she has fled from me, and you have ruined her. Draw, or I will plunge my sword to the hilt in your deceitful breast. Here, Leask! swear with me!—swear that the earth on which we tread shall drink the blood of one of us, or shall hide one corpse in its dark womb, to be made so even here before the morning."

As soon as these words were uttered by the old man, the whole three deer-stalkers took one step forward, and looking up to heaven with their naked blades raised aloft, they next, according to the Gaelic custom upon solemn occasions, thrust the points of them together into the earth at their feet.

"Maister," said Farquhar, aside, and coming forward with a look of solemn excitement, "my dream's rede: this is to be a bloody night; I heard the death-croak all day among the hills, and it is even now in my ears. There are some appointed to die who are here, and some whom we see not now—but I will stand by you till the last."

"There's a wreath come across my een," said Morrouch, next, and looking solemnly towards the sky; "I see it in the lift. But I'll lose my life in this glen afore I hear her glory an' honour ca'd a shame an' a coward. Here's my claymore fer't," he added, drawing, "an there's three gude men of us to the wild reivers."

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"Shall I take your life with your own sword in the scabbard?" cried Grumach, gnashing his teeth, and offering his point at Alaster's breast.

"You will rue this, Grumach Gordon, and I will rue it too," said Alaster, as he deliberately drew his claymore. "But I see there is a freedom before us both, and fate must be fulfilled."

As their blades crossed, the old reiver lounged furiously at first, but as if suddenly recollecting former trials of the same kind, he next fought with caution, and death and life seemed to be well believed by all to hang upon their several exertions.

"Is it not three to three?" said Leask, savagely, eying Alaster's men. "Though ye are servitors and wretches, yet here's at you for your master's sake, and Heaven help the last of a side!" In another instant the whole six persons were struggling together in mortal combat.

Confident in his own strength and dexterity, and anxious to spare the life of the father of his Moine, Alaster, as formerly, fought on the defensive, though he never found his old enemy so vigorous or so determined as he now was. Pursuing this mode, he unconsciously retreated a few paces towards the rocks behind him, when, as he parried with some difficulty the vigorous sword of his opponent, his attention was arrested by a sudden cry from one of the combatants, and he observed Farquhar drop in agony on the sod, while the savage John of Leask drew the blade of his long claymore slowly from out the body of his faithful servant. The shock of this sight had scarcely passed, when he felt the same sword ring against his own target, as with looks of tenfold ferocity the wild reiver joined his arm in double charge with that of Grumach Gordon. The necessity of exertion now added new nerve to the arm of the young soldier, and dashing at both with terrible strength, he by a single backstroke, which almost carried the head from the shoulders of his new opponent, laid John of Leask dead at his feet.

The old chieftain now drew back in astonishment,

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and as both for an instant took breath, Alaster observed Morrouch M'Combich grappling with his antagonist, the blood streaming plentifully from his bare knee; and as they struggled, the former tumbled disabled into the dry bed of the stream; while the latter, regardless of his immediate antagonist, or thinking him dead, came forward menacingly, and soon joined his vindictive sword to that of Grumach Gordon.

The fight was again renewed, the two against one, and soon appeared to look serious to Alaster, for his climbing of the hills all day had tired him long before this combat was forced on him, and his strength he found could not much longer avail him against two comparatively fresh men. Forced to retreat towards the rock, he was fighting with his back near it with determined bravery, when, as he was making a spring against one of his adversaries, the attention of all was suddenly arrested by a screaming cry from the height above, and in another instant the quick footsteps of some one descending the bank were heard nearly behind where Alaster struggled in this unequal battle. A second piercing scream echoed down the lonely glen, and immediately after the sheathed blade of some interfering stranger was vainly interposing between the infuriated combatants.

"For mercy's sake cease!" faintly screamed a third time the same shrill voice; but in the eagerness of the strife none seemed to know it but the amazed Alaster, upon whose heart it now struck so as almost to render him powerless, while the distracted stranger in the bonnet and trews threw herself before him as if determined to receive on her own slender body the furious blows desperately aimed at her lover.

"Beware! chieftain, beware!" shouted Alaster, from a sudden apprehension, as he struggled terribly in the midst of the confusion.

"Curse you! whoever you are, that would deprive me of my revenge," cried the infuriated Grumach; —"*there*—take the steel—'twill maybe serve you both!" and at the same instant his long swordblade

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passed sheer through the body of Moina Gordon, wounding even her lover beyond, whose body she thus shielded with her own. Another second had scarcely passed, when, as Alaster caught on his left arm the sinking maiden, his other opponent taking advantage of this circumstance, succeeded in burying his sword deep in the exposed side of the unfortunate youth, who, staggering back, holding Moina in his arms, supported himself against the rock that had frowned over this fatal combat.

"Hold me up, Alaster—my dear Alaster, hold me up till I speak," murmured the faint voice of the Highland maiden; "surely it was not by the hand of my own father that I have received my death,"—and she tried to stop with her trembling hand the blood that gushed from her bosom.

A few moments passed in perfect silence as the old man stood gazing on both, and almost gasping for breath from his late desperate exertion. Something struck him however, in the sound of the last voice, and drawing near to gaze in the face of the drooping maiden, still hanging in Alaster's arms, and both supported by the rock, his countenance assumed an expression such as may not be described, as he shouted, or rather croaked, in an agony of horror,—

"Mercy of heaven! what is this? is this Moina? my orphan child Moina, that I have stabbed with my own hand?" and the old man absolutely howled aloud in despairing consternation.

"I told you you would rue this fatal day, Grumach Gordon," said Alaster, faintly; "see you what you have done to your much-wronged child? It was she who, forced by your own vindictive vows to adopt this unseemly garb, prevented you from carrying an unreasonable revenge into the very camp of Montrose, while I have been a constant peacemaker between you and your enemies for her sake. Now we are both requited, for our hearts' blood mingles together on the green sod of this valley; and we shall be buried together," he added, straining the dying maiden to his

bosom—"buried in one grave in bonnie Glentowart, and lie together cold and quiet—for this is a sadder day for you, Grumach, than it is even for us!"

Need we dwell upon the petrified look of the old man, as he still gazed in the blenched countenance of his dying daughter, while all the circumstances of his unquenchable revenge crowded upon his thoughts, from the first prediction of wo in the cave within the forest to the impressive curse which rose in the festive hall of Braemar. As he grasped the clammy hand of the maiden, his scream of sorrow was absolutely heart-rending.—Then, when laying his ear close to her face, he heard her whisper of sincere forgiveness, and received her touching filial blessing, he covered his face with his bloody hands, and stamping on the earth in the bitterness of his grief, called upon Heaven in its mercy to strike him dead on the spot.

"Alaster, my dear—faithful friend," said Moina, now looking up, "bear me, if you can, to the brook, and lave my brow with the cold stream—for, oh! I am faint, and death is at my heart. Now, alas! you seem weak, too—but do not look so sadly on me—we shall meet again hereafter!"

He was barely able to assist her to the brook, and to lave her pale face in the stream, while he hung over her and kissed her warm lips; then with a breaking heart he watched over her, and both their lives seemed fast ebbing together.

"Embrace me, Alaster, once more," she whispered, "and bless me before I die—ah!—dear—dear friend,—alas! is this to be the end of all our hopes and our love?"

As the dying lovers thus communed together, the old man sat on a stone near, watching both in the dumb stupidity of despairing grief, while the remaining reiver ran and told the news to the outer sentinels of the camp. The wounded Morrouch next crawled from the bed of the stream where he had for some time lain, and startled the deep silence of the narrow glen in which all this was acted by the howl of bitter lamentation, which burst from his warm heart on witnessing the fate

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of his beloved captain. Darkness now began to gather over the valley as the lovers still comforted each other on the verge of death; but before the moonlight had fairly penetrated to the depths of the glen, the struggling spirit of the Highland maiden had fled for ever.

The news of the catastrophe having soon spread in the camp, a party of Highland gentlemen instantly proceeded to the pass, anxious for the life of their brave comrade, whom they wished at once to carry to his tent. But no entreaty could prevail on Alaster to separate himself, while he continued to breathe, from the body of his deceased love, and a small sheiling near received for the present both the living and the dead. Here he lay beside the corpse for the remainder of the night; but as long as life remained the unhappy youth persisted in refusing either to allow his wounds to be dressed or to permit the body of his Moina to be removed out of his sight, but continuing, while he had strength, to mourn over her, to kiss her cold brow, and to talk to her as if she was still able to hear him, he murmured constantly of meeting her in a better world, until, on the following morning, before the sun had scattered the mists from the top of Cairn Gorm, his own spirit had joined hers in the dim mansions of eternity.

The regret, or rather grief, even of Montrose himself, for the loss of his handsome and promising officer, he gave expression to in some stanzas still extant, said to be written by his own hand.

The Highland army now marched from Strathfeaghan, and the bodies of Alaster and of Moina Gordon were carried back to the castle of Braemar. It was a morning of sad and affecting excitement, that, when the cold remains of these two lovers were "lifted" amid a bewailing crowd from all the hills round, to be borne to that grave in which they had desired to be buried together. A sad sight it was, and a sore reflection it afforded to all the young hearts then present:—who can fancy the delights which true love might bring, could its course, ever in this world, be expected to run smooth!—

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and the piercing scream of the loud coronach of sorrow, and the wild and affecting strains of the bagpipes, as the bodies were carried up the strath of the Dee to the lonely burying-ground of Cronan, had such effect on the mountaineer multitude, that cailach or maiden, whoever heard it, never, it is said, could forget it more.

All that further belongs to our legend—besides the well-known fate of the unfortunate Montrose—is, that Morrouch M'Combich, having partially recovered of his wounds, was afterward killed in the bloody field of Kilsyth, in the Lowlands. As for the wretched Grumach Gordon, the cause of this whole tragedy, become quite deranged from grief and remorse, he lived for some time, more like a wild beast than a man, among the goats and the eagles in the fastnesses of Blair Athol; and now, when many high names of the time have long been forgotten, the tragical tale of the brave forester and his Highland maiden is still told or sung, with tears and moralizing, among the solitary glens of Braemar.

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THE PAINTER.

A SICILIAN TALE.

BY JOHN GALT.

"Mine honour is my life; both grow in one;
Take honour from me, and my life is done."
SHAKESPEARE.

ABOUT a league distant on the left side of the road which leads from Naples to Salerno stand the ruins of a considerable villa. The gardens had been formed in terraces on the mountain behind; the walls of them still exist, and the spacious stairs by which they were severally connected are proofs that it had been once the abode of taste and opulence. On the higher garden, a copious spring gushes out from the earth, and descends into the valley, leaping from terrace to terrace, and diffusing, as it descends, a fresh and beautiful verdure along the margin of its whole course. The peasants of the neighbourhood say, that a fountain, ornamented with statues, formerly stood where the spring now issues, and that the water was brought under ground in pipes from a small lake among the hills—perhaps it still comes in that manner, but however this may be, few situations have been chosen with a happier respect for the local genius.

This once delightful mansion originally belonged to the Bellochi family, and was the favourite residence of the last count of the race,—a nobleman possessed of many elegant accomplishments and amiable qualities.

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He had visited England, and was much attached to the subjects and the manners of that nation. His house was open in consequence to the English travellers, and when any of the friends he had known in London visited Bellavista, as the villa was called, no limit was set to his hospitality. He accompanied them himself to the numerous monuments of antiquity between Pœstum and the metropolis, as well as to the wonders of Vesuvius, and the relics of the exhumated cities, and he deservedly became celebrated alike for his munificence, his eloquence, and friendship.

One day, a large party of gentlemen, among whom were several of his most esteemed English friends, were received by the count with his customary kindness. He had but that day returned from Sicily, where he had, a few months before, married a lady of noble birth and extraordinary beauty. His house had not yet been opened for the reception of his friends, but still he was so delighted with the strangers, that, notwithstanding the want of preparation, he invited them to remain, promising, as an inducement, that although from the condition of his own household, he could not accommodate them with beds, he would himself ride with them to a monastery on the road to Naples, and, by his influence with the friars, secure them a hospitable reception there.

It happened in the evening, that on reaching the convent, several other travellers, bound for Pœstum, had sought lodgings for the night, and the count's friends could not be received as he had expected. To lighten the chagrin of disappointment, he accordingly at once resolved to accompany them to Naples, and sent back his servant Francesco to the villa, to apprize the countess of his intention, and not to expect him that night.

It was near midnight before Francesco reached the villa; the other servants, being fatigued with the day's hard labour, in bringing the luggage from the vessel which had brought them from Palermo, and with the unexpected bustle occasioned by the strangers, were

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all asleep when he arrived, and he was in consequence obliged to let himself in by a window.

On almost any other occasion this would not have happened; for the count had in his service a Sicilian painter, Salmano, who was employed in decorating some of the chambers—a man of rare gifts, and who had a particular taste for watching the tints and shadows of the moonlight for suggestions in his profession. But he too, being this night exhausted and weary, had foregone his nightly vigils. Nor was it a circumstance to attract notice, for he was a man advanced in life, of a pale and slender appearance, indicative of some constitutional infirmity. It was, indeed, a wonder among the domestics how one so evidently of a feeble frame could, night after night, pass so many cold and solitary hours studying the glimpses of the moon on the landscape, or the shadows of the statues in the gallery.

Before daybreak old Agatha, who had been the nurse, and was the favourite attendant of the countess, was suddenly roused by her lady coming into her apartment in the wildest and most distracted manner. She was still undressed; her long hair fell in loose tresses on her shoulders. She bore a lamp in her right hand, and shook her left, and gazed as if she had come from some frightful discovery.

Agatha was awaked by her entrance, but astonishment at the sight before her rendered her unable to speak, and she lay looking at the countess, who exclaimed with the voice of agony,—

"I fear—I fear—yet cannot I give utterance to the horror. I blush like a guilty wretch, and yet in what of shame have I been guilty—have I but dreamed! O Heaven! drive from me the imagination with which I am beset."

Agatha, terrified at these exclamations, raised herself, and entreated her lady to be composed, and not to repine too much at the absence of her lord.

"He will," said she, "be here by times in the morning, and you must not think of this frolic in that way. I beseech you, my dear lady, to be calm. Though the

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count were dead you could not be in greater affliction."

"To me he is dead," cried the countess; "to me he is lost—and I am lost. Call up the household,—I am not yet mad."

With these wild words she hastened back to her apartment, and Agatha, trembling, dressed herself, and went to call the servants; but when she reached the landing-place of the great stairs, she found Francesco standing there, as if he had been watching.

"How does the countess?" he inquired, with a confident look, which, however, Agatha did not observe particularly at the moment, but replied,—

"She is wofully sad; it is very strange that she should be so sad—where is the count?"

"He is gone," said Francesco, "on to Naples, and sent me back to tell the countess. Does she suspect?"

"How!" cried Agatha, surprised at the cunning leer of the fellow, "what should she suspect?"

"I could not inform her," replied Francesco, confusedly; "she was asleep."

"Asleep, Francesco! How knew you that?"

"She made no answer when I knocked at her door."

"Knocked! Did you dare disturb her?"

A momentary shudder shook the whole frame of old Agatha, and she looked with a curious suspicion at Francesco, who said, in evident embarrassment,—

"Why do you look at me in that manner? Perhaps she did not hear."

"She must have heard you—audacious!—but why is she in such distress?"

"Is she distressed?" replied Francesco. "Do you then think she will be angry when she sees me? The door was open, and I thought she knew my voice."

"Dared you to enter?"

"In truth, Agatha, I did." And, in saying these words, Francesco hastily descended the stairs in evident terror and alarm. Agatha remained immoveable, and, bursting into tears, exclaimed,—

"There is some mystery—horrible mystery. Oh!

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could she be—a lady so chaste, so excelling in love to her lord."

She was interrupted by Salmano, the painter, who at this moment entered, and to whom she said briskly,—

"What seek you here?—this is about the time you were wont to go to bed."

"I have risen to see the dawn," replied the artist. "Last night I was fatigued, and early went to sleep. But go to your lady—she is very ill."

"She only grieves that the count has, so thoughtlessly, not returned;" and she looked eagerly at Salmano.

"Has nothing else happened to her?"

"Do you then think that she has some other cause for sorrow?"

"I hope no other: but she looks as one that I should give ducats to have for my model as Lucretia, escaped from Tarquin."

"Her grief is natural. The first night in a strange land to be so deserted!"

"No, no; it comes of a deeper wound."

"Why think you so?" sighed Agatha.

"The painter's skill," replied the artist, "instructs him to discern the mind in the face. I never saw her in such anguish before. It may, however, be as you say. But tell Francesco to come to me betimes. The day is beginning to dawn, and I want him in my study. The fellow has a lascivious look, with such a sober air, that he assists my fancy, as I am painting Susannah and the Elders—he is an elder."

Agatha made no answer, but with sadness in her eyes left him, and the painter went to his study; soon after Francesco, as desired, entered.

"How now!" said Salmano, "you keep me idling."

Francesco, with sullenness, replied,—

"I am not hired to be a Jewish priest—I have my master's business."

"He said that when I wanted you, all your other duties should be suspended."

"But I have business in Naples."

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"Does not the count return this morning?"

"How should I know?"

Salmano looked at him steadily for nearly a minute, and then said,—

"You have a masterly command of yourself. But, fellow, there is trouble and fear in your eye; what guilt have you committed? what have you done, that your presumptuous hopes may not yet be concealed?"

"You amaze me, sir," replied Francesco with awe.

The painter laid down his easel from his thumb, and taking up his hat, said,—

"I am here but professionally, and am not of a prying disposition; but you have done, or I mistake much, some guilty deed, to which some wild hope is attached."

With these words he walked into the garden, and before Francesco had time to recollect himself, Agatha came into the room, saying, "I thought Salmano was here." At these words Francesco stepped forwards, and taking her by the wrist said in a whisper,—

"I do not like that painter."

"No!"

"If we were in some secret place, I could tell you something, Agatha."

"Well."

"Agatha, you are knowing, observant, and prudent; but I wish we were in some room less exposed. How did the painter look when you saw him first?"

"He deplored the grief of the countess."

"He was not stirring when I returned. Artists are men of subtle craft. When I returned last night, I went to my lady's room—"

"Daring shame—I told her so!"

"How did she look when you told her?"

"Like Paulina, in the picture there, when told that her lover was not the god Anubis."

"It may be good, Agatha, for the painter to turn on me. These men of art do other things at night than catch moonlight shadows; but be cautious:" and he suddenly left the apartment, while Agatha, in great per-

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plexity, said aloud to herself, after thinking some time,—"My fears first fell on him; he is of that complexion, and I have seen him looking intemperately at her. Salmano, too, but not like him—here in his study she may be seen among his goddesses; and when he looks at her the most ardently it is as a student pondering over his book. I should as soon expect to see him bedded with Diana; but the rank look of yon insinuating wolf makes conviction, even in my doubts."

By this time the household were all afoot, and some remarkable apprehension appeared to infect them all with distrust of each other. The painter was deeply affected; he could not resume his pencil, but walked alone in the garden and shunned every body. Agatha noticing him from the window, went to him and said,—

"You were not formerly inclined to walk in the garden. Days are not your time of study; but you walk too much in the night. Night is the season of sleep, and none trespass on its lonely hours but those afflicted with guilt or love."

"My profession," replied the painter, "requires that I should study the varieties of light and shade."

"Cannot you, then, be content with sunshine?"

"It is my taste, Agatha; my genius prompts me to study the moonlight."

"What is that genius, signor? I hear of it; but none in the house can tell me what it is."

"It may not be easily explained," replied the artist; "but some have a keener relish of one thing more than of another than their neighbours. Some are charmed by the ear, and some by the eye. The senses are the gates of the mind, and genius enters by the most frequented, or that which is best constructed."

Agatha paused thoughtfully; for though aged, she was shrewd and wary. She then said,—

"Genius, then, makes men prone to find and to seize their means of enjoyment, and as you forego your rest to hunt midnight shadows, or rise in company, forgetting who may be present, and bid a fair lady bend her head aslant, as she would look from a picture; some

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other, by the difference of his genius, would equally, without decorum, seize on his means of pleasure."

"You are wonderfully metaphysical," said Salmano. "I did not think you were so much of a philosopher. But why are you so suddenly changed, and so earnestly?"

Agatha, without noticing his question, inquired, seriously—

"How came you to be stirring this morning at two, and yet, when I met you at daybreak, you said that you had but just risen?"

"I told you," replied Salmano, "the truth."

"Was ever such a robbery committed?" cried Agatha, with an accent of grief.

"Am I suspected of a theft?" replied the painter.

"O! no, it was not done by you—I could pawn myself for your integrity;" and she instantly quitted the astonished artist and fled, in tears, into the house. Soon after Francesco came into the garden; he had plainly no business there; but he sought the painter, who, on perceiving him, went straight towards him, and said, severely,—

"A crime has been committed last night!"

"I know it," replied Francesco. "Do you blame me?"

"Are you afraid, mannerless dog, that I should? But, if I could persuade the world of my skill, there would not be wanting evidence to do so—the forehead mark is plain upon you."

"Shall I be ruined by your fancies?"

The painter, indignant at hearing his art so contemned, said, with greater energy,—

"Lewd epicure, it is not for thee to know the scrutiny of the painter—ay, or the holy purposes to which his art may minister. The painter's pencil can teach like the poet's pen; and feelings, faithfully limned, instruct the mind, and improve the heart. Go, menial; go and be punished."

Francesco was thunderstruck, and slunk, abashed, from his presence. Soon after the countess sent for

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the painter, and as he entered the house he met her confessor coming from her. He would have spoken to the priest, but the old man was in tears, and turned from him. On approaching the countess, he found her seated alone, in sublime serenity—a passion of sorrow that could only take expression in a calm—a calm like the stillness of death.

"I pray you, Salmano, take the command of this ill fated mansion; place sentinels at the gate,—men you can trust. Let no one pass till my lord returns. See that Francesco do not escape. O, serpent! that could so invade the Eden of my wedded faith. I can no more!" and with these words she stabbed herself, and instantly expired!

A terrific cry from Salmano brought many of the servants into the room, and among them Francesco. To him the painter solemnly said, "Her heavenly spirit is away like a poor frightened bird, appealing to the heavens against the hand that plundered its early nest. Rouse thee, thou wretch! there is no vision here!" More he would have added; but in that moment Francesco seized the dagger, and pausing, as if he hoped some one would arrest his hand, plunged it, disappointed, into his own heart.

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THE

LAIDLAWS AND THE SCOTTS.

A BORDER TRADITION.

BY THE ETTRICK SHEPHERD.

CHAPTER I.

> Thieves a', thieves a'.
> Frae Annadale haughs to Tiverton ha',
> Set your backs unto the wa',
> Raise your brands an' bang them a',
> Then drive their cattle frae the shaw—
> Thieves a', thieves a'.—*Scraps.*

It is well known through all the south of Scotland that there was once a powerful clan of the surname of Laidlaw, settled in the upper parts of Teviotdale, about the sources of the river Borthwick. Craik was their chief place of abode, but they had likewise all the land in its vicinity, which they held of Scott of Branxholm, on a curious tenure, still preserved by one of their descendants, of

> "Twenty stotis, twenty steris,
> Twenty domperis, twenty deris,
> Twenty coggaris, twenty maris,
> Twenty men all the yeris."

And for this they were to have in possession, from year to year, as long as this motley rental was paid,

> "All the Craik and Cribbie Law,
> Evil Rigg and Metishawe,
> Craig's Hope and Berrye-belle,
> Wolf Cleuch and Kaiphill-sheele,

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With lefe to hunt, and lefe to brewe,
Lefe to delfe, and lefe to plew,
Lefe to steile, and lefe to strayne,
But never lefe to gif agayn."

This is written in a sort of pass-book—that being the only lease given or required,—and on it there are many subsequent markings quite unintelligible; but there is a codicil with a date of 1537, bearing, that instead of twenty men to be at the laird's call every day of the year, they were to have fifty men at three days' warning. Of this curious document I have no copy, but it proves that the Laidlaws were a clan of considerable power at that time, and every family of the name in Scotland can trace their origin from Craik, or its vicinity, to this day. Of their final ejection from that place there remains among the people the following tradition:—

The Laidlaws were known to be a subordinate clan, brought and sustained there by the lairds of Buccleuch. Of course they acknowledged no other chief. But they had always a head of their own name who led them to the field. It appears that for ages this chief's name continued to be William; and it is generally still the name of the eldest sons, or elder branches of families.

Well, it happened in the course of a great east-border feud that one of these Williams, the captain of the Laidlaws, slew a lady with his own hand who was making her escape with the family heir. It was a rash deed, done in a moment, and dearly repented. The mortally-wounded lady turned her dying eyes upon her ruthless assassin, proclaimed a curse and woful doom upon him, and from that moment Laidlaw's peace of mind was gone for ever. He was a man advanced in years, having several grown sons and daughters; and on the very day of his return home to Craik he resigned the leader's sword and casque to his son William, testifying his resolution of living a life of humility and repentance. It was in vain that his sons and brethren represented to him that it was the chance of war to a mortal enemy, who had slain a number of their own

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near relations; he only answered them by internal groans, and beckoning to be left in silence.

A short time after this, as Laidlaw was walking at even, down by the partings of Borthwick, he perceived a lady coming from his own house towards him, with a babe in her arms. He did not like her appearance, for she came towards him with such a slow and stately gait; and therefore he changed his course, and took another road home. He walked up the side of the burn where it joins the river, but again perceiving her meeting him there he turned downward, and took a road that lay between two fields of corn. In the mean time she glided across the field, and advanced to meet him on that path likewise.

Laidlaw did not exactly like to make a break through the corn for fear of a woman, though he felt a strong disposition to do so; he therefore put on a resolution, and met her. When she came nigh, she beckoned to him, as one who wished to be addressed; but when he looked at her, he saw that he looked upon the face of a corpse. He saw the wound upon her breast, and then he knew her; and the babe appeared to be dead also. This was too much for the old man. He tried to move off, but could do nothing but stumble and fall; and constantly as he lifted his eyes towards home, he perceived her before him, till at last, losing all power, he wrapped his head in his plaid and threw himself down; and in that position he was found by his sons, about midnight, quite insensible.

He told them next day what he had seen, assuring them that his end was nigh at hand, he having had a visit from beyond the grave; and he charged all his sons, leaving it as a command to them and theirs for ever, never to lift a hand against either a woman or child, whatever might be the motive or provocation. Sacredly was this precept kept by the Laidlaws, and many pleasant instances are there on record of their exertions in behalf of their vow. But at this time old Laidlaw's horrors were but beginning; for his state of mind became such, that he was never left alone, either

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by day or night, but this apparition of the lady and child appeared to him; and at length, when kept constantly in society, it appeared to those that were with him as well as himself. It was now judged by all requisite to speak to the phantom, but, strange as it may appear, not one of the clan ever could muster resolution at the moment to do it, till the old goodwife of Craik did it herself, asking the lady, in the name of the Most High, what was her business with her and her household?

"I must go where I am commissioned, and do as I am bid," said the phantom.

"Have you any thing to tell us?" said the goodwife, fearfully.

"Yes," said the apparition, "I have to inform your husband there, who thinks he has left the lands of Oxnam and Kail without an heir, and without an inhabitant, that in spite of all he hath done, these lands shall still be possessed by the rightful owners. And while he thinks the Laidlaws are secure in their ample possessions, I have to inform him that ere the fourth generation from himself pass away, there shall not be one of the name left in their present habitations."

"Well, the will of the Lord be done!" said the goodwife. "And who is to effect this?"

"I will effect it," said the apparition, lifting her pale hand, and shaking it terrifically in the view of the old woman; and, having done this, she glided away, not by the door, but into the closet where the old couple slept. From that day forth, though the lady and child were reported to have been occasionally seen, yet her visits were neither so frequent nor obvious; but no Laidlaw durst ever more enter that closet. Even the goodwife, with all her courage, durst never follow the spirit into that recess, and as they believed it still to be an inhabitant of the house, their minds were so much overpowered with awe that they left it altogether, removing to the place where the farm-house at present stands.

This singular event, to which it is now the fashion to refuse belief, at all events served to imbue the character

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of the Laidlaws with a tinge of superstition, deepening the sombre hues even of that age of imaginary terrors. Their character, as warriors, was a little marked with ferocity, but invincible bravery and determination none could deny to them; but in all that related to beings of a supernatural order they ultimately became the slaves of alarm and distraction, and by degrees there was scarcely a dell in all their remote glens that was not believed to be the haunt of some particular spirit, or even of whole hordes of them; and a woman with a child in her arms would at any time, even at noonday, have caused a Laidlaw to turn out of his way.

Shortly after the period that the above-narrated event happened, a bellandine, or reiving expedition, was proclaimed by the laird, and fifty Laidlaws hastened to his standard. To the great joy of the clan, old Will went at the head of the Laidlaws once more; but, as will appear in the sequel, this proved a dear reiving to them. The men having mustered with considerable strength, they set forth against the rebel Douglas, when a most desperate engagement occurred at a place called Kirkmyllie. The Laidlaws were led by the laird's eldest son, a young knight of great bravery. They formed his right-hand troop, and at the beginning of the fray they broke in upon the Angus men with such fury, that they could not be supported by the rest of the army, until they were surrounded, and a great number of them cut off. Sir John Johnston, Buccleuch's brother-in-law, came up first to the rescue, but he came too late. His brave nephew had fallen. Elliot of Lariston had also fallen, as well as old William of Craik himself, with one-half of his whole company. The latter wrought such prodigies of desperate valour that day, and appeared so reckless, that it was manifestly his wish to fall on the field of fame, and yet to sell his life as dear as he could. He was buried on the same field, with thirteen of his kinsmen on either hand, but I have never yet been able to discover where this field of Kirkmyllie is situated.

Fatal as this intrepid onset proved to the heroes that

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made the assault, it had the effect of turning the day completely against the Douglases. The shock that it gave their left wing was so rapidly followed up by the Johnstons, that it was broken ere ever Buccleuch had begun the attack on the other, and the Douglases were put down with great slaughter. The knight of Buccleuch received great praise from his sovereign for this exploit, and also extensive grants of land, which were far better; and as the Laidlaws had suffered so severely with his beloved son, they became greater favourites than ever. Their present captain was lame, having been wounded in the battle with the Douglases, and the clan was led by his uncle, Wat of Eelrig, commonly called *Gurly Wat*, from his fierce, unbending temper.

CHAPTER II.

After this, the Laidlaws finding that they were become favourite vassals of their chief, and deeming themselves necessary ones, became troublesome and overbearing neighbours, and many complaints were lodged at Branxholm Castle against them. Among others, there was a bitter animosity rose between them and the Scotts of Hawpasby, who were at that time near kinsmen to the chief, and threats and broken heads were matters of daily occurrence. This must have been a considerable time subsequent to the death of the first William Laidlaw mentioned; as the head, or principal tacksman, was then actually the fourth from him. But as every thing was prospering with the clan, the ghost's prophecy had worn out of mind.

Now it so happened at this time, that though there was peace on the border nominally, yet frays on a small scale were never more frequent; and, among others, the Laidlaws made a desperate moonlight raid

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into Cumberland, and drove from thirty to forty fine bullocks from the lands of Musgrave of Longwell. Musgrave complained to the English warden, who gave him men, and ordered a pursuit, and these troopers traced the cattle till they came to the house of Walter Scott, of Hawpasby, whom they charged with the theft, threatening to carry off himself and every thing that he possessed. Scott declared himself true man and leel, and proffered, if one of Musgrave's beasts was found with him, to yield up to them all the cattle he possessed. But it so happened, that either through chance or design, two of the cattle were actually found on the lands of Hawpasby.

On this discovery being made, Scott fell to accusing the Laidlaws, and assured the Englishmen that they were the thieves, else those cattle could not have been there, and proffering, at the same time, to assist Musgrave in the recovery of his own. Musgrave showed him an order from Scroop, signed by a depute of the Lord Maxwell's, to reive, harry, burn, and destroy the thieves, wherever they were found. This pleased Hawpasby exceedingly, as he thought he now had a fair and safe opportunity of rooting out his inveterate foes, or, at all events, of harrying them completely. So he took Musgrave in, and told him that they were a hardy and dangerous race, who kept a watch over their herds and flocks every night; that at the sound of a horn, a hundred men would appear, well armed, in the course of half an hour; and that it was, therefore, absolutely necessary to deal with them by stratagem. "But I know a secret," added Scott, "that is not known to every one, and will take in hand to drive every watcher from his charge before eleven at night, and then your men and my own must be expeditious, and leave not one hoof or horn on all the fair possessions of the Laidlaws."

The proposal pleased the Englishmen well. The neighbouring Scotts were called together, and joined with the pursuers, and after dark they marched off in a body, Walter Scott of Hawpasby going about a mile

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before them to clear off the watchers, as he had promised. First clothing himself in a white sheet from head to foot, he then tied a white gauze napkin over his face, put a woman's kerchief on his head, and took a pillow below his arm for a baby. This last was said to have been a masterpiece of its kind. It had a piece of white tape worked straight round it for a neck, a child's cap on its head, and, and with its smooth white face, was as feasible a ghost of a bairn as could well be conceived. They went to the farthest watcher first, on the east end of the Crib-law. His name was Alexander, who, as soon as he saw this unearthly-looking lady and child approaching him in the bright moonlight, left his charge and fled like a wild deer, uttering exclamations of horror and short fervent prayers all the way. Scott likewise ran, keeping as it were between him and the house, which drove the poor fellow away on the wings of terror nobody knew where; for though many were the sublime sounds heard and forms seen by the Laidlaws in the cloud of mist or the moonlight glen, yet all this only made their hairs stand on end, or excited to a strain of devotion; but the ghost of a lady and a child was to them the acmé of every thing horrible in nature, the bane and terror of their whole race; and some say, though I hardly believe it, that the poor scared man ran on to the end of his life, without looking back to craik or any thing that belonged to him.

The Englishmen and their allies now seized on this forestand of cattle, and drove them off to the southward. The next watcher they found on a spot which has often been pointed out to the writer of this. It was near to the point where the farms of Wolf-Cleugh Craik and Craik Hope now meet. His name was David Laidlaw, one of the stoutest and bravest of his race, but a man well advanced in years. When this old borderer perceived the gigantic and hideous form of the lady and child approaching, he was seized with the same indescribable terror as his relative, and casting every thing from him ran towards the valley in the utmost terror. Tooting-horn, sword, and all were left behind, and, in

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the plenitude of his fear, instead of running homeward, he ran in the contrary direction, not knowing what he did. But this was not the way the ghost wanted him to run, because in doing so he came infallibly upon the drove, and would of course discover and disarrange the whole plans of the English.

In order to prevent this the ghost now exerted itself with all its might to keep between David Laidlaw and the Aittes Burn, which the drove was then crossing; but in doing this it overshot the mark, for though David was the prey of superstition he was a man of shrewd common sense; and on climbing a brae on the south side of the cleuch that falls into Aittes Burn, something struck David's organs of hearing, which riveted him in one moment to the spot. This was no less a phenomenon than the sound of the ghost's puffing and blowing at a furious rate. "Hurray!" cried David Laidlaw, his fear changing into the height of rage and indignation. "Hurray! D—n—n on it," shouted he again, and springing down the brae like a bolt of lightning he came full drive on the object of his former terror with such force that he overthrew, down-hill, the ghost and himself at the same time.

The affair now became exceedingly serious; desperate and deadly struggle commenced, but Laidlaw being unarmed and stripped, had the advantage. Hawpasby endeavoured again and again to draw his sword, and by these efforts lost the chances of his superior strength and youth; for David clung to him so closely, that he could make no use of his arms. At length the incensed yeoman pinned Scott to the earth, and fixed on his throat with both hands, insomuch that he had only time and power to call out, in a half-stifled voice, "It is I, David Laidlaw; it is I." But these were the last words he ever spoke, for Laidlaw handled him so roughly, and clutched him so hard about the thorax and windpipe that he died in a few minutes after the other quitted hold of him.

By this time the cry of war was raised, and bullocks' horns sounded loud and long from the top of every hill

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David now hasted back to his charge, and found his plaid, his sword, and his sounding-horn, but the cattle which he watched had entirely disappeared. Great was his perplexity and his indignation, for he never perceived the enormity of his neighbours' offence till then. So far from being sorry at having killed the ghost, he now wished him alive only that he might kill him over again. The Laidlaws assembled to the amount of one hundred and twelve, pursued the prey, and on their way, at the head of Raphy-grain, met with a body of the Scotts returning under Scott of Langshaw. They attacked this body at once, and slew Langshaw and other seven; nor would one of them have made his escape if the inveterate Laidlaws had had time to pursue them. The Englishmen being deserted by the Scotts as soon as they entered the border territory under the protection of the Lord Maxwell, fell an easy prey to the incensed Laidlaws. The skirmish was fought at a place called to this day the Bloody-sike, where but a few were slain on either side, for the Englishmen being taken at a disadvantage soon fled. The Laidlaws had likewise been joined by a body of Potts about the break of day. Musgrave himself was taken prisoner, whom they carried to Craig Hope; and because he would not make over to them a right to all the cattle they had taken from him, and as many more, they cut off his head and buried him on the hill. The Scotts afterward raised a huge cairn over his grave.

Great then was the outcry against the Laidlaws, both by the Scotts and the English borderers. Two gentlemen of the name of Scott had been slain, both of them related to Buccleuch, and one of them to the house of Thirlstone likewise, and the whole clan cried for vengeance. The cause was heard by the great and judicious Sir Walter, who strove hard to save his old faithful and hardy vassals, and, citing their original bargain, of

> "Leave to steal and leave to strain,
> But never leave to give again;"

he fairly told his kinsmen that "he judged them the

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greatest aggressors, and if the Laidlaws had acted as they had done in joining with the English foragers to harry his own vassals, he would have punished them severely; but it was against his maxims of border government to punish any set of men for defending their own."

But the English nobles raised such an outcry against Sir Walter at court, that he was actually taken into custody by King James the Sixth, as I believe, and compelled not only to give David Laidlaw up to the English, but to turn the whole clan from off his territories. He is reported to have expostulated and striven hard against this arrangement, but was at last compelled to submit, and the whole sept was dismissed from Buccleuch's property, after possessing it as long as he had done himself. He suffered no man, however, to molest them, and they being men rich in flocks and herds, scattered themselves over the neighbouring counties, and took extensive possessions from other proprietors, but all of them, to this day, trace their origin from Borthwick-head. The clan is numerous and respectable, and are still generally noted for hot violent tempers, and uncommon strength and agility of frame.

Thus was the prediction of the ghost literally fulfilled in all its parts; for in the course of the fourth generation there was not one of the Laidlaws left in their former extensive possessions. And as to the ghost having effected it, that was certainly not literally fulfilled; but the whole bore such an analogy to the first superstitious belief, and the death of Harpasby, who personated the ghost, being one of the primary causes of their dismission, it must, upon the whole, be allowed that few prophecies have been more fully and satisfactorily accomplished.

The Scotts got possession of their lands, and retain a part of them to the present time, but for nearly a century no Laidlaw was admitted on the property. Still there seems to have existed a bond of friendship between the chief and his old trusty vassals; for it is certain, when that same Sir Walter, who expelled them,

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raised a regiment to assist the Prince of Orange against the Spaniards, that fifty of the Laidlaws at once joined his standard, as usual, though all from the lands of other gentlemen.

After the death of the Duke of Monmouth, however, and the great convulsions that then shook the kingdom, a few families again got possessions under their old hereditary chief; still it is quite apparent that they are not half so numerous on that extensive property as the adjoining districts to the northward. The whole of them still cleave to the pastoral life—as the learned say, *Multis terribilis cavito multos.*

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THE UNGUARDED HOUR.

BY JOHN GALT.

> "Can such things be,
> And overcome us like a summer's cloud,
> Without our special wonder?"
>
> *Macbeth.*

MANY proverbial expressions are founded on experience. "The unguarded hour" is one of them; and it has become so common, that few of those who oftenest employ it are aware of the mystery to which it alludes. It conveys the belief that mankind are each protected by a supernal guardian. It implies also, that the angel at times quits his post, and that in the interim, "the unguarded hour," the defenceless mortal is liable to be assailed by the insidious temptations of the universal adversary. Whether this impressive thesis be an hypothesis, or an apocalypse, it baffles the human understanding. It cannot be rejected as altogether earthly and of mortal imagination, nor accepted as divine and of celestial descent. But it is not my present purpose to examine the evidence on either side; I have only to describe a series of seeming accidents, calculated to enforce the doctrine by the circumstances in which their advent took place, and to awaken at once solemnity, wonder, and dread.

"Many years ago," said a friend, "when detained by indisposition in a small village in Hungary, a discovery was one morning made, by which the superstition of the simple inhabitants was greatly excited. It

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had been a custom from time immemorial, when the judge in office travelled through the country to dispense justice, that as often as he came to Panigstein, and I believe it was only once in a course of the cycle of the moon, every nineteen years, and at the change, that he held a free assize in the open air, near the Martyrs' Cross, an ancient monument which stands alone on the solitude of the moor, at the distance of a bow-shot or more from the church. The cause of this venerable ceremony being held at that particular spot, was never satisfactorily explained, but it originated either in a prediction which had been delivered by the martyr, or on some incident connected with his doom. On every occasion, when the court was held at this spot, the inhabitants were summoned, in the name of Heaven, to hearken to the list of offenders which the magistrate of the district openly placed in the hands of the judge, and all such as could bear witness to aught regarding them were commanded to come forward and do so.

"Although then but in shattered health, this remarkable ceremony, which chanced while I was at Panigstein, induced me to be present among the crowd of spectators when the judge was expected to arrive. The day was gray and silent; the sun was not invisible, but his dim orb hung in the firmament with an obscure lack-lustre sickliness, and all the landscape, and every living thing, seemed overcast and dejected. The ensigns of judgment which marked the place of administration added to the solemnity of the scene; and the magistrate, to augment the gloom, had ordered a lofty new and black gallows to be raised at a little distance from where the benches and table for the court had been constructed.

"Among other impressive customs connected with the free assize, is one of unknown antiquity. The magistrate, in preparing the list of offenders for the judge, is not allowed to divulge to any person the names of the criminals intended to be accused; and it is alleged, that this has a religious influence on the morals of the people, no one being aware how his con-

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duct may have been noted, nor of what he may be found charged with in the list. The crisis is, in consequence, very awful to all. On the occasion when I was there it was not anticipated that any particular crime would be divulged, and it was thought rather odd that the magistrate should have ordered the gallows to be erected; indeed, in the opinion of the people, the calendar was clear, so peaceful and free from all violence had been the country from the former assize, nineteen years previous.

"The magistrate I knew very well; he had sometimes invited me to his house; was a gentleman in great esteem with the immediate villagers. From small beginnings he had raised an ample fortune, was famed for the strictest integrity, and distinguished for great benevolence and a holy purity of life. It was thought by many that there was some degree of affectation in his singular piety, for in his youth he had been less austere, and he had put on his sanctity somewhat suddenly, in consequence of an event which, though distressing in itself, could not be said to affect him more than any other in the town.

"It was a murder committed exactly nineteen years before the very morning when the assize was held. No trace of the assassin had been discovered, and that circumstance, together with the worth of the victim, had produced a strong impression on every one; but on none more than this magistrate, whose faithful servant the victim had long been. The crime was mysterious, for the man was poor, and it excited universal surprise that one who in his condition had been so much respected should ever have provoked a doom so sudden and inexplicable. Time had greatly mitigated the recollection of the occurrence; it was almost forgotten by every body but by the widow and the charitable master, who, with his family, constantly endeavoured to soften, with unavailing sympathy, her grief. She, however, became old and crazed, and when pointed out to me was a spectacle of extreme misery. She was standing near the Martyrs' Cross, against

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which, owing to my weakness, I was then leaning, and, although she appeared sullen, and perusing the ground, I observed her eyes vividly glancing with supernatural vigilance. She was as something wild and fierce, ready to leap upon its prey, and watching for the moment. But I had not much time to notice her, for the sound of trumpets proclaimed the approach of the magistrate, attended by his officers, and soon after a movement in the multitude also announced the coming of the judge.

"When he had taken his seat on the judicial bench, and the lawyers had placed themselves at the table, the trumpet sounded a solemn peal three times, and the magistrate, with a roll in his hand, advanced. At the same instant the widow rushed, with a shriek like the oracular Pythia in her ecstasy, and placed herself at the side of the magistrate, as he presented the roll to the judge. The multitude was silent, and I felt as if the functions of my breathing were suspended.

"The judge rose, and standing up, unrolled the paper, which, with an audible voice, and religious thankfulness, he declared was clear.

"'No, no,' cried the impassioned and vehement widow, 'it is not so, it has not my husband's death.'

"'True!' exclaimed the magistrate, 'I had forgotten it, the deed was done so long ago, nineteen years ago, —how was it possible I could forget the unguarded hour?'

"The words were repeated by every voice, I believe, in the multitude in succession, and the sound was fearful. 'The unguarded hour?' said the judge to himself, looking towards the magistrate calmly, as if the question had scarcely more meaning than when uttered in echo by the crowd.

"'Yes,' cried the widow aloud, 'his guardian angel was then away;' and she concluded, by accusing the magistrate, her own benefactor, and the gracious master of her deceased husband, as the murderer.

"'She has been long, almost ever since the fatal event, in a state of insanity,' said the magistrate to the

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judge; and turning to his officers, bade them take the helpless creature away.

"'I will not go,—I will have justice,' she exclaimed, wrestling with the officers, as they attempted to remove her. The crowd remained as if frozen into silence.

"'Good woman,' said the judge, compassionately, 'you know not what you say.'

"'I do, I do: let me be heard,' was her wild reply; and the multitude in the same instant cried out, 'Let her be heard, let her be heard!'

"'This is a vexatious business,' said the judge to the magistrate, 'for the charter by which the assize is held at this place obliges me to receive the charge, and I cannot depart from its ordinances, nor is her evident insanity a valid reason to reject the accusation. Good woman, why do you persist in this extravagance? there is no evidence to sustain the charge.'

"'There is, if you will listen,' she impatiently again cried, and with earnest gestures and surprising eloquence endeavoured by innumerable coincidences, that she had remarked in the conduct of the magistrate, to show the grounds of her sudden suspicion.

"During the whole time that she continued speaking, the spectators listened with the greediest ears, and before she had finished her impassioned appeal, it was manifest that they were all convinced that the magistrate was indeed the murderer. The judge listened to all she said with intense attention, but the accused maintained his wonted equanimity. I was astonished that he could do so, for some of her reasons, though far from probability, were of the most touching and pathetic kind; doubtless all she said was void of evidence; still, however, it was fearfully impressive, and I could not myself withstand its energy. When she had rather exhausted her strength than finished what she had to say, the judge replied solemnly,—

"'Protect us, Heaven, from having aught to conceal from such vigilance—this is thy work, and comes not within the possibilities of human law! There is reason, according to the charter, that a regular trial should

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be proceeded with, and therefore let the indictment be prepared.'

"The feelings of the multitude were excited to the utmost, and took utterance in a loud shout, not of joy or of gladness, but a deep, solemn, and awful sound, whose might and majesty were portentously increased by the distant low hollow echo of the hills. The accused stood a statue of consternation for a moment. I looked at him with indescribable emotion, but the paleness which overspread his complexion vanished, and he appeared as serene and self-collected as before.

"While the papers were being written I observed the judge speaking to the poor woman, and I heard him sympathizingly inquire respecting the age of her husband, his general appearance, and the manner in which he was dressed; to which she gave brief but distinct answers, as if the living presence of the murdered man had been seen actually before her. She was, however, impatient at the judge's questions, and answered him peevishly, forgetting the respect due to his dignity: indeed the questions, at the time, seemed to me frivolous; I could not discern their propriety, nor why so grave an officer, the representative of the emperor and king, should so far lose all consciousness of the place and the occasion as to speak to her in the manner he was doing. He asked, for example, the colour of her husband's hair, and she answered black, and that he wore his cap gallantly doffed; then after some other inquiries as insignificant, he spoke of his coat, and the colour of it, but she lost temper; and after telling him it was blue, and his vest red, intreated he would not probe her wounded remembrance with matters of that kind.

"In the mean time the magistrate was engaged with an advocate who was perfectly convinced, and so expressed himself, that the trial would soon be safely over. Altogether the scene was most singular, but the passion of the crowd was become appalling, and I was fearful lest the magistrate should be made the victim of some outrage. Himself calm, and certain that no evidence could sully him, he was yet visibly dis-

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tished; and I saw him once or twice start, and shudder, no doubt amazed that such a delirious accusation should have been so strangely imagined against him.

"When all the requisite forms were completed, he was directed to place himself at the bar; and the judge, according to the charter, called him by name to answer to God, who was there present, for the crime of which he was accused. At that moment, and before he could reply, the sun darted a bright and golden ray upon the forehead of the judge, and made it shine as if he had been crowned with a halo. All the spectators were witnesses to this glorious symbol; and I could scarcely control my trembling limbs, so much did it shake my whole frame.

"The accused was evidently affected, but he had such mastery of himself that he answered with firmness, 'NOT GUILTY.'

"A pause of some time ensued, and then the widow was requested to come forward with her evidence. She advanced, and suddenly cried, 'I have but these tears.'

"The advocate with whom the accused had been consulting rose, and animadverting on the insanity of the charge, demanded an acquittal.

"'Stop,' said the judge, solemnly, 'the order and provisions of the charter have not yet been all fulfilled,—bid the trumpets sound thrice.'

"The silence of the multitude was dreadful; the trumpets sounded, and the judge, rising from his seat, reverentially uncovered his hoary head, and said with a voice of the lowliest humility,—

"'Heaven, send forth thy witness.'

"I looked at the dismayed prisoner; he was pale, but serene. The judge then resumed his seat, and the advocate again rose;

"'I demand,' said he, 'the acquittal of the accused.'

"Another short pause ensued, and the judge rising, cast his sight to a distance, and said,

"'Make way for the witness.'

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"'What witness?' cried the prisoner, in visible trepidation.

"'That man in the blue coat—he with his cap on the one side—make way for him—he with the red waistcoat.'

"'It is himself that comes,' cried the widow with an exulting shout; and all the spectators looked back towards the spot where they expected to behold the witness, but they saw no one; and when they had again turned their eyes to the bar, the accused had fainted. This confirmed the amazed spectators, and the judge kneeled down with devotion, and, raising his hands to heaven, prayed and did homage to divine justice. The wretched criminal was left lying on the ground, for all present at the same moment uncovered their heads, and with tears and awe joined in worship with the judge. A more affecting scene was never witnessed; and when the adoration was ended, the guilty man awaked from his trance, rose, and confessed the crime.

"'I seek not mercy,' said he, 'I have enjoyed it too long, yet my offence is not of an atrocious die—it was but a hasty blow. Yes, the hand of Heaven is so visible here that I dare not ask remission, even if my hidden misery were not punishment enough,—there, take me,—be now no more delay. The gallows is ready, and mercy dare not in this place contend with justice.'"

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THE CHEATERIE PACKMAN.

BY LEITCH RITCHIE.*

The beings of the mind are not of clay.—Byron.

It was yet pretty early in the morning when I arrived at the inn of Skreigh, and never having been in that part of the country before, my heart misgave me at the appearance of the house, and I thought that surely I had mistaken the road, an awful idea to a man who had walked twelve miles before breakfast! It was a huge, gray, dismantled edifice, standing alone in a wild country, and presenting evident traces of a time when the *bawbees* of the traveller might have procured him lodgings within its walls for a longer period than suited his convenience. On entering the parlour, although the "base uses" to which this ancient mansion had returned were clearly indicated by certain gillstoups scattered about the dirty tables, yet the extraordinary size of the room, the lowness of the walls, and the scantiness of the furniture, kept up in my mind the associations which had been suggested by the exterior; and it was not till the aroma of tea, and the still more "fragrant lunt" of a Finnan haddie had saluted my senses, that the visions of the olden time fled from my eyes.

While busy with my breakfast, another traveller came into the room. He had a pack on his back and an ell-wand in his hand, and appeared to be one of those travelling philanthropists—answering to the pedlers of the

* Author of the "Romance of History—France," &c.

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south—who carry into the holes and corners of the sylvan world the luxuries of the city. Our scene being on the *best* side of the Tweed, I need not say that the body had a sharp eye, an oily face, and a God-fearing look. He sat down over against me, upon one of the tables, to rest his pack, and from his shining shoes and orderly apparel, I judged that he had passed the night in the house, and was waiting to pay his score, and fare forth again upon his journey. There was, notwithstanding, a singular expression of fatigue on his yellow countenance. A common observer would have guessed that he had been brim-*fou* over night, and had risen before he had quite slept off the effects; but to me who am curious in such matters, there appeared a something in his face which invested with a moral dignity an expression that would otherwise have been ludicrous or pitiable.

Ever and anon he turned a longing eye upon the Finnan haddie, but as often edged himself with a jerk farther away from the temptation; and whenever the landlady came into the room, his remonstrances on her delay, at first delivered in a moaning, heart-broken tone, became at last absolutely cankered. The honest wife, however, appeared determined to extend the hospitality of breakfast to her guest, and made sundry lame excuses for not "bringing ben his score," while she was occupied in displaying upon my table, with the most tempting liberality, the various good things that constitute a Scottish breakfast.

"Are you not for breakfasting, good man," said I, at length, "before you go forth this morning?"

"No, please God," said he, with almost a jump, "no carnal comfort shall pass my lips on this side the mill of Warlock!"

"The mill of Warlock!" repeated I, with surprise, "that should be at least twelve miles from this—and I can tell you, my friend, it is not pleasant travelling so far on an empty stomach. If you have any urgent reason for an abstinence that we of the kirk of Scotland attach no merit to, you should not have loitered in bed till this hour of the morning."

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The packman, at my reproof, put on a kind of *blate* look, but his features gathering gradually into solemnity—

"Sir," said he, "I *have* urgent reasons for my conduct, and while this weary wife is making out my score, I will, if you desire it, tell you the story." Having eagerly signified my assent, the packman wiped his glistening forehead, and with a heavy sigh began to discourse as follows:—

"Aweel, sir—it was at this time yesterday morning I arrived at the mill of Warlock. The miller was out, and his wife, glad of the opportunity, rampauged over my pack like one demented. She made me turn out every article in my aught, and kept me bargaining about this and that, and flyting by the hour about the price; and after all it came to pass that the jaud (God forgive me!) wanted naething of more value than three ells of riband! You may be sure that I was not that pleased; and what with fatigue, and what with my vexation, while I was measuring the riband, and the wife sklanting round at the looking-glass, I just clipped—by mistake like—a half-ell short. Aweel, ye'll say that was just naething after the fash I had had, and moreover I stoutly refused the second glass of whiskey she offered me to the douroch; and so, shouldering my pack again, I took the way in an evil hour to the inn of Skreigh.

"It was late at night when I arrived here, and I had been on my legs all day, so that you may think my heart warmed to the auld biggin, and I looked forward to naething waur than a cozy seat by the ingle-side, or chat with the landlady—a douce woman, sir, and not aye so slow as the now, foul fa' her! (God forgive me!) forby, maybe, a half mutchin—or twa: and all these things of a truth I had. Not that I exceeded the second stoup, a practice which I hold to be *contra bonos mores*—but ye'll no understand Latin? ye'll be from the south? Aweel—but there was something mair, ye ken, quite as necessary for a Christian traveller, and a wearied man; and at last, with a great gaunt, I speered at the serving hizzie for my bedroom.

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"'Bed-room,' quo' she, 'ye'll no be ganging to sleep here the night?'

"'Atweel,' said the mistress, 'I am unco wae, but every room in the house is fu'. Hout! it's but a step to the town—no abune twal miles and a bittock—and ye ken every inch of the way as weel as the brass nails on your ellwand.' I wish I may be forgi'en for the passion they put me intil! To think of sending me out such a gait my lane, and near the sma' hours!

"'O ye jaud!' cried I, 'if the gudeman was no in the yird the night, ye would craw till a different tune!' and with that such a hulliballoo was raised amang us, that at last the folks began to put in their shouthers at the door in their sarks to speer what was the matter.

"'Aweel, aweel,' said the landlady, in the hinder end, quite forfaughten, 'a wilfu' man maun hae his way. There is but ae room in the house where there is no a living soul, and it's naething but an auld lumber-room. However, if you can pass the time with another half-mutchin while Jenny and me rig up the bed, it will be as much at your service as a decenter place.' And so, having gotten the battle, I sat myself down again, and Jenny brought in the other stoup—ye'll be saying that was the third; but there's nae rule without an exception, and moreover ye ken, 'three's aye canny.'

"At last and at length I got into my bedroom, and it was no that ill-looking at all. It was a good sizeable room, with a few sticks of old furniture, forby a large old-fashioned bed. I laid my pack down, as is my custom, by the bedside, and after saying my prayers, put out the candle and tumbled in.

"Aweel, sir, whether it was owing to my being over fatigued, or to the third stoup in defiance of the proverb being no canny, I know not, but for the life of me I could not sleep. The bed was not a bad bed, it was roomy and convenient, and there was not a whish in the house, and not a stime of light in the room. I counted over my bargains for the day, and half wished I had not made the mistake with the miller's wife; I put my hand out at the stock of the bed and felt my

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pack, amusing myself by thinking what was this lump and that; but still I could not sleep. Then by degrees my other senses, as well as the touch, wearied of being awake and doing nothing—fiend tak them—(God forgive me!) sought employment. I listened as if in spite of myself, to hear whether there was any thing stirring in the house, and looked out of the curtains to see if any light came through the window chinks. Not a whish—not a stime! Then I said my prayers over again, and began to wish grievously that the creature had her half-ell of riband. Then my nose must needs be in the hobble, and I thought I felt a smell. It was not that bad a smell, but it was a smell I did not know, and therefore did not like. The air seemed close—feverish; I threw off the bedclothes, and began to puff and pant. Oh, I did wish then that I had never seen the physiog of the miller's wife!

"I began to be afraid. The entire silence seemed strange, the utter darkness more strange, and the strange smell stranger than all. I at first grasped at the bedclothes, and pulled them over my head; but I had bottled in the smell with me, and, rendered intolerable by the heat, it seemed like the very essence of typhus. I threw off the clothes again in a fright, and felt persuaded that I was just in the act of taking some awful fever. I would have given the world to have been able to rise and open the window, but the world would have been offered me in vain to do such a thing. I contented myself with flapping the sheet like a fan, and throwing my arms abroad to catch the wind.

"My right hand, which was towards the stock of the bed, constantly lighted upon my pack, but my left could feel naething at all, save that there was a space between the bed and the wall. At last, leaning more over in that direction than heretofore, my hand encountered something a little lower than the surface of the bed, and I snatched it back with a smothered cry. I knew no more than the man in the moon what the something was, but it sent a tingle through my frame, and I felt the sweat begin to break over my brow. I would have

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turned to the other side, but I felt as heavy to my own muscles as if I had been made of lead; and besides, a fearful curiosity nailed me to the spot. I persuaded myself that it was from this part of the bed that the smell arose. Soon, however, with a sudden desperation, I plunged my hand again into the terrible abyss, and it rested upon a cauld, stiff, clammy face!

"Now, sir, I would have you to ken, that although I cannot wrestle with the hidden sympathies of nature, I am not easily frightened. If the stoutest robber that ever wore breeks—ay, or ran bare, for there be such in the Hielands,—was to lay a finger on my pack, I would haud on like grim death; and it is not to tell, that I can flyte about ae bawbee with the dourest wife in the country-side; but och, and alas! to see me at that moment, on the braid of my back, with my eyes shut, and my teeth set, and one hand on the physiog of a corp! The greatest pain I endured was from the trembling of my body, for the motion forced my hand into closer connexion with the horrors of its resting-place; while I had no more power to withdraw it than if it had been in the thumb-screws.

"And there I lay, sir, with my eyes steeked, as if with screw-nails, my brain wandering and confused, and whole rivers of sweat spouting down my body, till at times I thought I had got fou, and was lying sleeping in a ditch. To tell you the history of my thoughts at that time is impossible; but the miller's wife, wo be upon her! she rode me like the night-hag. I think I must have been asleep a part of the time, for I imagined that the wearisome half-ell of riband was tied about my neck like a halter, and that I was on the eve of being choked. I ken not how long I tholed this torment; but at last I heard voices and sounds, as if the sheriffs' officers of hell were about me, and in a sudden agony of great fear, I opened my eyes.

"It was broad morning; the sun was shining into the room; and the landlady and her lasses were riving my hand from the face of the corpse. After casting a bewildered glance around, it was on that fearful object

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my eyes rested, and I recognised the remains of an old serving-lass, who it seems died the day before, and was huddled into that room, to be out of the way of the company."

At this moment the landlady entered the room with his score, and while the packman sat wiping his brow, entered upon her defence.

"Ye ken, sir," said she, "that ye *wad* sleep in the house, and a wilfu' man maun hae his way; but gin ye had lain still, like an honest body wi' a clean conscience, and no gaen rampauging about wi' your hands where ye had no business, the feint a harm it would hae done ye!" The packman only answered with a glance of ire, as he thundered down the bawbees upon the table, and turning one last look upon the Finnan haddie, groaned deeply, and went forth upon his journey.

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THE BOGLE O' THE BRAE

A QUEER COURTING STORY.

BY THE ETTRICK SHEPHERD.

> A fearful light shot past my eep,
> And stifled voices gaffed;
> Then a glow'ring bogle grimm'd at me,
> I shook wi' fright, and swarf'd.
> So I'll gang nae mair a courting,
> A courting in the night;
> And I'll gang nae mair a courting,
> Though the moon be shining bright.
> —So I'll gang nae mair a courting.
>
> *Scraps.*

"After a', Jock, I think we shouldnae gang to the courting the night."

"Weel, that beats a' that I ever heard! after trysting me to come sae far! I am sure the project was nane o' mine, but ane o' your making up, an' I wad like to ken what has happened that has made you alter your mind sae strangely."

"Why the truth is then, Jock, that I hae been hearing tell o' some dashing young chaps, wha hae lately been visiting the lassie o' the Brae, an' therefore I'm no that unco sure about them. I hae nae muckle time to lissen to lasses that gentlemen are aye hingin' about."

"Daft gowk! Heard ever ony body sic a silly insinuation? It is a little-worth bargain in the market that there are naebody looking after but yoursel', an' to take a distaste at a lass because another admires her, appears to me to be rather against nature. Lasses

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were made to be admired an' courtit. They ken that, an' they like it. In fact, they have nae power to resist it, for if they were ever sae averse to the company o' gentlemen, they canna, in common civility, prevent their visits, an' just barefacedly bid them gang about their business and no come back again. Na, na, Davie, siccan whimsies winna do. It will only make them a wee the waur to court, an' we'll have the mair fun in winning them to oursels. For as to doubting the genuine virtue and purity o' the lasses o' the Brae, I could just as soon doubt my own idiosincracy."

"Eh? Your own ideo—what? Plague on ye wi' your lang words an' far langer speeches! But after a' Jock, I think we *should not* gang to the courting the night."

"Weel, an' I think we *should* gang; an' I am determined to gang mysel whether you gang or no. I dinna understand this change! What for do ye lay sic an emphasis on 'should not'? I hope it isna the bogle you are alluding to?"

"You have heard tell o't, then?"

"To be sure I have. But do you think I'm such a fool as to believe in a nonentity?"

"Eh? A nonentity? What's that?"

"It is an ideal being without existence, like your bogle, Davie; an' I really wonder how a good, religious, decent lad like you can believe in sic a delusion as that the Brae is hauntit by a bogle."

"There are some things that a man canna help believing, Jock, no wi' the help of a' the philosophy in the warld crammed into him. An' therefore I shall say nae mair but this, that I think we wad be wiser to stay where we are, an' no gang to the courting the night, till we hear mair about things."

"Na, na, Davie, I'm no gaun to be put off that gate. Ye hae ventit twa very heavy insinuations against the lasses o' the Brae. First, that they are taking themselves up wi' grand gentlemen, and neist, that their house is hauntit wi' a ghost; an' I say these are baith very cruel insinuations. Ye should remember that the

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slightest stain on a young woman's character is unco ill to wash out again."

"What can I help it, Jock? It wasna frae ony ill design that I said sae, but what I ken to be true I *will* say. I say then that there *are* gentlemen hovering about these lasses wha *canna be* wanting them for wives—make o' that what you will. An' I say further that *there is* a bogle about their house, for I saw it mysel', an' got a devil of a glif wi't too. Ay, sic a fleg that I hae never been sae right sinsyne. Even a lang-nebbit word, wi' a bogly sound like a nonentity, gars me start."

"Ha! ha! ha! that's precious! That is quite superlative! Come, tell us a' about it, man. This is grand! I *did* hear lately that the place was hauntit by a ghaist, an' that the twa auld folks were terrified amaist out o' their wits about, but that the lasses thought it a fine ploy. An' it is quite weel understood to be ane of their sweethearts dressed up like a corpse in a white sheet to keep the other lads away on the Friday nights."

"Do you say sae, Jock. If I wist that to be true I wad gie that ghaist sic a drubbing as a ghaist never got out o' the ill place. For d'ye ken it used me waur than a dog? An' since ye hae put that in my head, I will not tell a word o' the story till I try that ghaist's mettle aince mair. If you will stand by me, Jock, I'll grip in on it, an' be it a spirit or be it a mortal creature, I shall put its energies to the proof."

"Gie me your hand, brave neighbour. That's spoken like a man! Stand by you, man! I'll never bid you stand by *me*, for I'll gang afore ye a' the gate, an' as I ken weel that a' the bogles that appear to wooers are naething but scarecrows, wi' ae swapp o' my staff I'll let you see me ding your bogle heels-o'er-head, an' walk straight on to the delicious joys o' smiling beauty."

Davie, without more ado, took down his plaid and hazel staff, and with his bonnet drawn down over his brow in a sort of determined manner, jogged off with his amorous companion. Davie was convinced he had been imposed on, and was this night resolved to work

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his way to bonny Barbara Bell against the opposition of spirits and men.

Barbary was the eldest but one of old Farmer Bell's daughters. He was a yeoman of old and respectable standing, but his farm was small, and his income, in these piping times of peace, still smaller. Consequently his daughters were neither ladies nor hizzies. They wrought all their father's work out and in; dressed like ladies on the Sundays—drank tea once a year with the parish minister and his family—read their Bibles, chapter about, on the Sabbath evenings—were healthy, comely, and amorous—the toasts of all the young shepherds, joiners, masons, and even tailors of the parish; submitted to be courted at least one night in the week, and when young gentlemen or principal farmers' sons came to see them, the heaps of oatmeal cakes, scones, butter, cheese, and ham that loaded the table were truly tremendous, while to all these dainty and rare articles the blithe, healthy, and hard-wrought lasses were the best customers. It did one's heart good to see them, and it was supposed did delight the heart of every one except their mother, who wanted always to have them so genteel and mince-mouthed before company.

"Ye need na fash to halve that scone, mother, hand it just by to me as it is."

"Dear lassie, ye eat as gin ye hadna seen meat the day."

Such was the family, and such the lasses of the Brae, to whom our two shepherds were this night going a-wooing. They were lasses that far surpassed all the others of the district for lightness of heart, good-humour, and a restless, and rather mischievous, jocularity.

"What was the bogle like, that ye saw at the Brae, Davie?"

"It is not easy to tell what it was like. It appeared first to me, at a distance, like a man o' fire, as if he had been made of a thin lowe. Then he came bolting forward, girning an' glowring as if he wad hae swallowed me up.

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Then away back again, sae far that I could hardly ken him. I gaed round an' round the house, trying a' parts to get in; for when ane has a real sweetheart, it is hard to be worn back frae her. I assure you, I was nae easily cowed, but I saw enough that night to hae put the maist part o' folks out o' their reason."

"All a trick, Davie—a mere trick o' legerdemain, carried on wi' the lasses an' their sweethearts, for fun. They are capable of ony harmless trick in the world, thae lasses. We shall see. We shall see."

"I was fairly driven frae the field at last. But yet I hae some jealousings that it was a trick. For when I was at the very desperatest, an' praying like mad, I am almaist certain I heard some bursts o' suppressed laughter. It is the thought o' that which puts me mad, an' gars me yearn to have a hand-shaking wi' the ghaist. If it be a man, I'll nip his windpipe to him; if a woman, I's no say what I'll do. But if it be a spirit—a shadow without a real substance—why man canna contend wi' it."

"Not by strength o' arm, but by the supreme might o' knowledge and learning he may. Now you were talking of praying, which I suppose had no effect. Whereas I am in possession of the mighty words that can lay any spirit.

"Then, Jock, ye hae ane o' the greatest treasures in the world, and we are safe. Pray, will you teach me the sentence?"

"Recite the words after me, then. *In te Domine speravi.* What do you laugh at?"

"I laugh to hear you ca'ing the spirit an in-tae'd dominie. It is not the least like a dominie. But we are drawing near to the spot, now, an' if my een dinna deceive me, yonder it is beginning to glimmer. Now, Jock, take you the lead, as you promised, an' face the in-tae'd dominie."

Jock, with a gallant swagger of his arm, took the lead, but his breath was manifestly cutting, through apprehension. In the ascent towards the house, one loses sight of it, until he emerges all at once on the verge of

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a platform, about fifty paces from the door. From the verge our two shepherds cautiously set up their heads, right in front of the old house. The night was pitch-dark, and the windows all closed; but nearly where they judged the door ought to have been, they perceived a dim, glimmering light. "Now, yon's it—yon's it"—whispered Davie to his companion; "yon is the very spot where it rose from upon me. Yon is the individual fiery guardian-angel of the lasses. But dinna be dauntit, Jock, for it will be astonished when it hears itsel' ca'd an in-tae'd dominie. Now, let us advance with caution, an' keep a good ee, for ere ever we ken what we are about, it will be on us like a fiery dragon."

"Do you think—we had not better—retreat for a little—and—keep a due distance—till we see?"

"No, no," said Davie, determined to see the farthest possible; "push on; remember, that it is only a trick—a mere trick of legerdemain, contrived by the lasses and their sweethearts to keep rivals at a distance. We must not be humbugged this way."

Thus admonished, and half pushed forward by Davie, who was resolved to fathom the phenomenon, Jock advanced, step by step, keeping his head very high, and breathing somewhat short, Davie still encouraging him on with cheering words. "Pray move on a little faster, Jock; an' keep in mind the laying words; I hae a great deal to lippen to them."

At this moment, the dim light rushed forward upon them, and there stood up immediately before Jock, a hideous sight indeed. There was the evident appearance of a female corpse, dressed in dead-clothes, with its white eyes turned up, its white lips grinning far apart, and its pale hand clenched, and waved in a threatening attitude; while, at the same time, the whole form of the apparition was involved in a ball of thin flame. Now, though it necessarily takes some little time to describe this, the whole was the operation of a moment—of the twinkling of an eye. Jock uttered a short, horrific roar, exactly resembling that of a Highland bullock, and throwing himself backward with

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maniac force upon Davie, he overthrew him down the steep, and fell right above him. He was so grievously hurt he could not rise, but there he lay, rolling and exclaiming, "Plague on your coward heart! for I'm a killed man! Murdered, smashed, broozled! Wae worth a' thy bragging an' thy lang-nebbit words, an' lang-tailed sentences, for great words an' great actions never gang thegither!"

"What gruing an' shivering is a' that," cried the other, "ye heartless blockhead? get up an' come away, for I'm lamed, an' mad, an' just in a key to face the devil! Jock! Jock! I say, what ails ye? Speak; are ye dead, or only felled? What, naething but groans! As the I— is my life, I believe the chap's deeing in good earnest. Hilloa! Hilloa! Lights here! Lights an' water! There's a man murdered! Murder! Murder i' the howe this night!"

Out went the lambent light, and then there was a great bustle about the house, and a confused noise, as of women's voices and men's voices mixed, and among the rest a suppressed one, that he heard, saying, "That's Davie Dinlap's voice. I hope naething bad may hae happened to him." The lasses came running with lights, and bonny Barbara foremost. "Take care, and keep your distance," cried Davie, "for I'm an eeritated man, sairly hurt, an' my neighbour's killed. Wha are ye? Are ye the ghaist again?"

"Na, na, Davie; I'm nae ghaist, but genuine flesh and blood, in the form o' your ain Barbary o' the Brae. What's the matter?"

"O, the matter, lassie? Ye will ower soon see what's the matter. Here is ae man murdered, an' another deadly wounded. Look at Jock Guidwood o' the Coglee, there he is lying stiff. An' then, look at me."

The eye follows aye the heart. Barbara looked first at Davie, and uttered a loud scream, for he was covered with blood, but hardly ever deigned to look at Jock, who was lying rigid on the green. Her sisters gathered about them, and, assisted by two genteel young men, they carried Jock quite stiff and insensible into a bed

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in a hay-loft, for fear of disturbing the old farmer and his wife who had retired to rest. One of the young gentleman took on him the management of the hapless wooer's case; and first he blew some powdered ginger up the nose; which had the effect of making him sneeze slightly, but he only opened his eyes, stared wildly about him, and then died again. Still the young gentleman treated the sufferer only with a degree of levity, as if sensible there was no danger; and, calling for a pipe, he forced some tobacco-smoke down the deceased's throat, which forced him to come alive, to prevent himself being suffocated. He did not, however, come to his right senses all that night; but the next morning, after sunrise, he took his plaid about him, and with a face as white as a clout made off for home, without bidding the lasses of the Brae good morrow. He never went more back there to court, nor would he ever after so much as smile when Davie mentioned the in-tae'd dominie to him.

Not so with Davie, who clung to his beloved Barbara, notwithstanding the mystery that surrounded her. He was not much wounded, being only cut a little on the hand and cheek, and having besides bled plentifully at the nose, so that after he was washed he was whole, or nearly so. He was confounded and distressed beyond measure at what he had seen, yet it was out of his power to believe any evil of Barbara. He entreated her, as she valued his esteem, to explain to him the mystery of the apparition that night, but she put him off with dark hints and insinuations, assuring him at the same time that she would explain it all to him as soon as she comprehended it herself. She told him farther in confidence that there would be more news about it still, and that of a more serious description.

The word now spread like lightning that the Brae was haunted by a malevolent spirit, which caused a great sensation through the district, and many were the unfeasible stories that were circulated about the Bells. That a murder had been committed was naturally and generally admitted, but then there was nobody missing.

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Among others, Mrs. Curror of Dogdean, and her daughters got hold of it, and made grand stories out of it. At one time the mother was a witch, and surrounded by wicked spirits. At another time there was a certain young lady who had been very ill, and confined to her room for some weeks, and though no grown-up woman thereabouts was a-missing, what was to hinder the apparition from being the ghost of a baby. They did not see why the ghost of a bairn should not be as big as the biggest woman in the parish. Such insinuations as these and many more were marrow to the bones of Mrs. and the Misses Curror.

Mrs. Curror was a widow lady, and had likewise four daughters, far richer, far prouder, and a great deal idler than the lasses of the Brae. Nevertheless, at all kirns, weddings, dancing-school, and charity-balls, it so happened that the lasses of the Brae were far more in demand, and one or other of them uniformly taken to the top of every country-dance, because in truth they were far more lovely and amorous, and had a double proportion of glee and animation. There were, moreover, flocks of wooers constantly running to the Brae, while at Dogdean one was a great rarity. The consequence was that the Currors hated their rivals with a perfect hatred; and from morn to night their chief concern was now the making commentaries on the story of the ghost; and a very bad story they made of it.

Well, but it so chanced that a wooer *did* come one night to Dogdean, a handsome, swaggering little fellow, and quite an Adonis in beauty. He told his errand briefly and without hesitation, saying he was come to court Miss Alice Curror, if there were no particular objections. He was a joiner, he added, by profession, a first-rate workman; and his name was John Laidlaw. As the old mother knew his father well, as honest a man as ever lived, and,—in short the young wooer was not only made welcome but caressed exceedingly; and never was Miss Alice Curror seen to walk through the house with such an air as she did that night. It was quite supreme, for there was conscious dignity and

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satisfaction in it; and when the old mother went to her bed and left the two lovers by themselves, she gave Jock Laidlaw a good-humoured wink, and bade him sit near her. Now this young buck needed no such hint, for at the very first he began with a flirtation that had something suspicious in it, and really began to use freedoms with Miss Alice even before her mother and sisters, which no other lover would have used but himself, and which, perhaps, no other maiden in the parish would have admitted. But that my fair and fastidious readers may not be in the least degree shocked, it is best to tell them at once that this handsome and dashing wooer was no other than Miss Jane Bell of the Brae, come to hear the blemishes of her own character and those of her mother and sisters;—she did so with a vengeance! For it was the theme in which Miss Alice delighted, and in the most vituperative slander of them did she spend the greater part of the night. The young and blooming coxcomb had, however, attained the means of a severe retaliation; and Jane Bell went home in the morning highly delighted with her courting expedition.

This was on the Friday night; and on the evening of the Monday following there was a dance and supper, on account of some charity, where the rival damsels all met together. Miss Alice was never seen so gay; she smiled, tossed her head at the lasses of the Brae, and talked of wooers and of forsaken maidens; and it was remarked that the name of John Laidlaw was often heard pronounced with considerable emphasis when there did not seem any very prominent reasons for such pronunciation. In short, the handsome young wooer had made such an impression on Miss Alice Curror, that she was half crazy with reflections and anticipations of delight, until supper-time, that the malicious Jane Bell took care to place herself close by her side. But at every friendly remark made by Miss Jane, the other threw up her nose in disdain, with a "hum" or a "hey indeed," and mentioned to her left-hand neighbour that appearances were *certainly* very much against

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some people just now; and then asked what was the common punishment inflicted for *fanticide.*

At length Jane o' the Brae said to her very seriously, in a whisper, "I am really sorry for your behaviour the night, Miss Alice, an' perfectly ashamed o't. How can ye gang ower the name o' Jock Laidlaw, when it is sae weel kend to a' that's here what kind o' night you and he spent on Friday night last?"

Miss Alice's lips turned into a deathy paleness, and her eyes fixed in her head, while her exulting rival followed up her threat with a minute description of all that passed between them, as well she could, and all the scandalous things that she had said of herself and sisters. Miss Alice's proud and silly heart could not stand this exposure made to her detested rival, her form grew rigid, and all that she was capable of doing was swallowing down great gulps of air, the muscles of her throat being apparently convulsed.

"Ay, it is ower true an' far ower weel kend, I fear," continued Jane. "He tauld me a' about it; and I believe has afore this time tauld every lass in the parish, for I observed them a' smirting and laughing as ye were gaun ower an' ower his name. But if ye had heard how he was laughin' at you? An' goodness forgie us! he said that; but it surely couldna be true. Ay that—;" here the malicious Jane whispered something into Miss Alice's ear. Nature could support no more. Miss Alice was supping, or rather had been supping minced collops out of a broth plate, with a cast-metal spoon plated over with tin, rather a heavy and substantial implement. On hearing the insidious sentence she sprung to her feet, her tall spare form appearing taller than ordinary, and dashing the yettlin spoon down on the plate and the minced collops till both were scattered in flinders, she ran to the door, screaming out a deep and hysterical ban on the whole male creation.

The company were dumbfounded! thunderstruck! Not one of them had heard a word that Miss Jane Bell had said in a serious and apparent friendly whisper,

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and of course they imagined her to have been seized by a temporary fit of lunacy of the most violent sort. Her mother and three sisters hurried out after her in great dismay, and supported her home.

But the adventures of this ominous night were but beginning. The road down to Dogdean is by the side of a hazel copse, on the right-hand, which extends almost close to the door. When the ladies came within twenty paces of the door, they perceived a dim light as if deep in the wood. The mother observed it first, and said in a whisper, "Bairns, what's yon?"

"It is a light," said one.

"You need not tell me that," rejoined the old dame. "But what can a light be doing there at sic a time o' night as this? I wish it may not be something uncanny."

"Lord forbid!" said the other daughters; but there was no time for further observation, for out of that dim light the Devil came rushing upon them like a tremendous lion, all on flame; his fierce bloodshot eyes rolling most furiously.

"Yell!" quoth the mother, and "yell!" screamed the daughters, all with one squall. Down they tumbled together, and over and over in a tangled heap they rolled, never letting one yell abide another, until at last they landed all in a coil on their own little parlour floor.

Unluckily at that moment in rushed Girzy Blake the kitchen maid, with a light. The effects of a sudden light on terror-stricken people are well known. Every one of them fainted; and there were all the five lying stretched on the floor, with their faces upwards, some shivering and grasping the carpet, others lying stiff and rigid as if in death.

Now Girzy was not deeply concerned about her five mistresses, for she liked them very ill, and cared not if they were all dead in good earnest; but she weened that it behooved her to do something in such an emergency. As the only expedient that struck her obtuse head, she first stuffed all their noses with peppermint, and followed that by clashing large pailfuls of cold

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water on them, all the while speaking without intermission to herself, or rather to them.

"Od, I's outher gar ye come to yoursels or else drown ye. Ye may depend on that! gin the pump keep but gaun, I's gife a slockening. Tak' ye that, lass; I sall gar your petticoats haud. Haw! but it is a strange business this. I wish ane o' you wad come about at ony rate, to help me to streek the rest."

Thus went Girzy, while running to the pump and back again, and giving pailful about to the fainted, till the room was fairly turned into a little loch, and the house was totally immersed in water. But Girzy wanted it deeper, still wisely conjecturing that if she could once get it to run in at their mouths and their ears, then they would be obliged to recover or do worse.

Miss Alice herself was now the first who came to her senses, the former agitation having prevented the fright from the appearance of the Devil impressing her so deeply. At first she began to splash and swatter like a young whale left in shoal water; but at length she sat fairly up among the liquid element, and stared around her with a face of terror. When Girzy perceived this token of returning animation, she ran for other two pails of water, and lashed it, about a gallon at a time, on the face and bosom of Miss Alice, whose screams much resembled the cries of a mawkin when being worried by dogs, though in inverse proportion, the latter always waxing weaker and weaker, but hers growing louder at every baptism; till enough to waken the dead.

It is needless to describe the whole process of their recovery, and how, one by one, they arose from their watery bed, with all the dismay and confusion that followed. These every one must fancy for himself, and suppose all the five in the eastern room denuded of their wet apparel, and snug in bed, with many sighs, and "oh! oh! oh's!" often repeated; and some low and fearful remarks on the strange apparition they had seen, and the small glowworm light from which it seemed

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to proceed. Alice spoke not a word good or bad, her heart was broken, and her character, as she conceived, entirely ruined by the trick played her by Jane Bell.

The old farm-house of Dogdean was like many others in that country. It had a front-door with a room on each hand, and a backdoor that led into the kitchen, and out to the offices. The bedroom in which they now were was the one next to the wood, and its window had no shutters, but a screen fell down inside, of a thin texture like a wire-sieve; and while the five ladies were all thus lying, under deep apprehensions, the mother observed a dim light that partially illuminated the room. She raised her head, and called aloud on her Maker's name, and in an instant all the five heads were popped over the beds. They perceived, with trembling dread, that something was approaching the window of a supernatural kind, but they had no time for observation, before the ghost of a lady appeared inside. It was the same apparition which appeared to Jock and Davie at the Brae, and had so nearly been the death of them both; and as it has been described already, it is needless to repeat the definition. It was a most appalling and terrific spectre, and the impression that it made was consonant to its hideous appearance. Over the beds tumbled the five maidens in the most dreadful dismay. The mother was the first at the door, but the others pressed so hard upon her that she could not get it opened, and every one was calling louder than another, "The bogle o' the Brae! the bogle o' the Brae!" the hindermost was absolutely screaming and reaving on the shoulders of the rest.

As they effected their escape through the kitchen, Girzy joined them, and all the six forlorn females scampered through the yard and over the dunghills, to the dismay and degradation of their fair and well-turned limbs. They took shelter in the stable, where they huddled together in a stall, and cried aloud for the servants and cottagers, who soon gathered about them, bringing them blankets and plaids in the dark to keep them from the cold, until it was at length resolved, that,

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with old Andrew Geddes at their head, they would all go in a body and once more take possession of the premises.

Andrew was a tall thin man, with hair and eyebrows as white as snow. He did not want courage, yet he would not believe there was any thing supernatural in the house, but that some vagary had entered into the women's heads, for he remarked that "naebody could tell what wad whiles enter a woman's head;" so at the head of eleven men and women he led the way across the yard. As he approached the door he perceived a small dim light within it, and was beginning to make some remarks on the circumstance, when the apparition of the lady again appeared close before him. It was a sight that nobody could stand, for there it stood once more with its white turned-out eyes, its raised shaking hand, and its grinning lips, when in another instant a gigantic figure rushed from the kitchen-door behind the ghost. This latter carried its head in its left hand, and in its right a bloody sword, with which it struck at the former apparition. The pale figure shrieked and vanished; the whole was momentary, but hideous in the extreme.

There is nothing so dangerous to an invading party as a hasty surprise in front. Andrew had conducted his array by a circuitous route through the dung-yard to avoid a vile puddle in the middle of it, commonly called the midden hole, but the force with which he threw himself back on the second rank, and that on the others, landed the whole party in this hole together, almost right above each other, Andrew having the good fortune to fall uppermost. He neither prayed, nor praised, nor repeated any portion of Scripture, but as with his long legs he made stepping-stones of his prostrate companions, he said, "Ye ken, sirs, this beats a'. Eh? It's nae joking ava this. Na."

All fled from the premises that instant, leaving the house deserted and the door open. Mrs. Curror and her daughters fled to the parsonage, at which they did not arrive till after midnight, and then in woful plight.

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Indeed such a set of wo-begone and wretched figures as admit not of description. The parson was greatly troubled, believing that some manœuvre had been effected towards an extensive robbery. All however were agreeably deceived, for next morning they found every thing safe and in its proper place, and no marks of depredation. But nothing could induce Mrs. Curror and daughters to return to Dogdean. They retained it only for two years longer, and then gave it up to Adam Blaikley, who still possesses it.

There has been no ghost-story in my remembrance, save the wife of Lochmabar, which caused a greater sensation than this, principally owing to a family having been fairly chased away by the spirit from their habitation, which caused people to say that that family had been conscious of some great guilt. But how it should have left one family who seemed to disregard it, and fasten upon another which it at once overthrew and dislodged—that was an anomaly in the annals of diablerie which could not be accounted for. I have only to add, that Davie Dinlap was shortly after this married to his beloved Barbary of the Brae, and the *real* John Laidlaw, the joiner, to her sister the wicked Jane Bell, who in her courting expedition had, it seems, taken her sweetheart's name.

One edition of this story after another came to my ears, but, for my part, I could not comprehend it in the least degree, taking it merely for an illusion, or some fairy vision not to be accounted for. And yet the testimony of two responsible shepherds had some weight with it. But Jock Laidlaw, the joiner, being a relation of my own, as the greater part of the Laidlaws are, I rode seven miles off my road in April, 1828, to visit him. He was working at a distance from home, but I found his wife and baby. She is an uncommonly fine woman, a perfect picture of health and good-humour, but in spite of all the insinuations I could use, she kept wide of the ghost-story, eying me from time to time, with a sly look, as if she suspected the purport of my visit. However, as she really appeared glad to see me, so,

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with the kindness and condescension always inherent in a fine woman, she had not the heart to let me go without my errand, though not till we were in the workshop, where my horse was standing, would she begin. I must give the story in her own words, which, to me, had a peculiar zest, owing to their candour and simplicity.

"Ye see, sir, the truth is, that the matter was keepit a profound secret on account of the Currors, but as you live sae far frae them, there is nae danger o' them having it frae you." (It was all that she knew about it.) "But ye see the story is a very simple one. It happened that hairst that twa young clarks o' the law" (writers' clerks I supposed) "came into our country for a month or sae to fish troots, an' shoot fowls, an' they war fine handsome chaps, wi' a great deal o' smeddum in them. They never gaed by us lasses, neither on the hay-field or hairst-rig, without some jaw passing. I was the greatest hempy for them, an' said mony a mad-like queer thing to them, that put them quite daft wi' delight, an' then it was naething but 'Miss Jane' that, an' 'Miss Jane' this, and 'Miss Jane' every thing. Ilka matter was referred to me, and we had fine gaffawing wi' the cheils, for they were free, hearty fallows, na' nae scrubs, an' likit the lasses excessively. Then they were every day sending us something, great creelfu's o' troots, black-cocks, an' muirfouls, an' fizzans, and whawps, and pae-tricks, an' great bunches o' muirsnipes, till at last my father was needcessitattit to ax them to their tea.

"Well, ye see they came, for they likit weel to be wi' us lasses; an' for our parts, we were perfectly delighted wi' them, for they were twa *real* queer ones, an' had sae mony quirks, an' nickknacks, an' handicraft tricks wi' them. An' among other things, they had what they ca'd a majic lanthorn."

"Oho!" says I, "I see where away all is to end now."

"Ay, now the secret's out," continued she; "but I maun tell you it a', for, oh! we had grand sport wi't. Ye see, the first night they tried it on us in a dark barn;

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we couldna keep our countenances down ava. Sikan awsome figures came glowming forret on us, that they gart us shiver, an' squeel, an' hide our faces, an' some o' us ran away awthegither. I stood it out, wi' muckle ado, an' at length came into them out o' the darkness, wawling like a wullcat, an' the tears rinning down o'er my cheeks. 'Well, Miss Jane,' every ane cried, 'what think you of it? What think you of it, Miss Jane? Eh, tell us.'

"'I'll just tell ye, maisters, what I think of it. Had I no kend that ye were here, an' were doing it by a handicraft trick, it wad fairly hae dung me out o' my judgment. An' in this country, where we a' believe in ghaists an' spirits, ye may put as many folks daft as ever ye like. Naw, oh! if ye'll but keep it a sincere secret, we'll hae sic sport on Friday nights, when the lads come, for there are a great deal o' idle chaps come here whase backs we wad rather see than their faces. If ye'll come here on the Friday nights, we'll gie some o' the chield's a gliff that they'll no soon forget, an' I'll help you a' that I can wi' that spiritual apparawtus mysel.'

"Weel, ye see the clarks o' the law were quite delighted wi' the project themsels, for as I said they likit to be wi' us lasses on ony pretence, but my sisters shook their heads an' lookit rather jumm on't; for my part I had made up my mind to Jock Laidlaw, but some o' them hadna made up theirs, nor hae they found time to make them up yet. So, the twa clarks o' the law came wi' their apparawtus, an' I watched at the garret window to gie them the word when ony body kithed. Weel, the very first night we put a tailor sae daft, that they had to blister his head, an' pit him on nettle broth. An' the very neist Friday's night, we had nearly killed twa nice shepherd-lads clean out; sae we were obliged for our ain credit, to debar the magic thing frae the house, an' pit down the sport.

"But the twa comical clarks of the law finding out frae oursels, an' partly frae others, the great malice that the Currors held against us, resolved, afore they

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gaed awa, to be revenged on them. I didna discourage the trick, but laughed rather heartily at the conception, and farther than that our family had no hand in it. Save on the night of the ball, after I had fairly put Miss Alice into the extericks, they took their apparawtus to Dogdean, an' gae them a fearfu' drubbing. What wi' the plashing o' cauld water, an' the midden hole, they hae been made a laughin'stock o' aye synsyne, an' they're likely now to gang a' auld maids to their graves. I believe the last wooer Miss Alice had was mysel, an' I ga'e her a gager's towzle, but she never kens o' the trick, nor ever shall."

On my asking how they could transport their apparatus so easily from place to place, she said the whole was not larger than a pair of bagpipes, for that the screen was as fine as a lady's veil. And thus was I forced to draw out my fine ghost-story from a palpable and simple deduction effected from natural and artificial causes, a conclusion which I have never hitherto reached, and with which I was neither satisfied nor pleased.

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THE BOOK OF LIFE.

BY JOHN GALT.

> Better be with the dead
> Whom we, to gain our place, have sent to peace,
> Than on the torture of the mind to lie
> In restless ecstacy.

—The story is in itself singular, and when you have heard how strangely the coincidences dovetail themselves together, you will not be surprised that I should hold such opinions. It was some time about Lammas, after leaving the University, I had taken a short botanical excursion among the mountains, and was returning home. Do not look so incredulous, it is no fantastical imagination of a young enthusiastic student, but a sober narrative, embracing many years.

The weather had for some time before been uncommonly wet, every brook and stream was swollen far beyond its banks, the meadows were flooded, and the river itself was increased to a raging Hellespont, insomuch, that the ferry was only practicable for an hour before and after high tide.

The day was showery and stormy, by which I was detained at the inn until late in the afternoon, so that it was dark before I reached the ferry-house, and the tide did not serve for safe crossing until midnight. I was therefore obliged to sit by the fire and wait the time, a circumstance which gave me some uneasiness, for the ferryman was old and infirm, and Dick, his son, who usually attended the boat during the night, happened to be then absent, the day having been such, that it was

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not expected any travellers would seek to pass over that night.

The presence of Dick was not, however, absolutely necessary, for the boat swung from side to side by a rope anchored in the middle of the stream, and, on account of the strong current, another rope had been stretched across, by which passengers could draw themselves over without assistance: an easy task to those who had the sleight of it, but it was not so to me, who still wore my arm in a sling.

While sitting at the fireside conversing with the ferryman and his wife, a smart, good-looking country lad, with a recruit's cockade in his hat, came in, accompanied by a young woman who was far advanced in pregnancy. They were told the state of the ferry, and that, unless the recruit undertook to conduct the boat himself, they must wait the return of Dick.

They had been only that day married, and were on their way to join a detachment of the regiment in which Ralph Nocton, as the recruit was called, had that evening enlisted,—the parish officers having obliged him to marry the girl. Whatever might have been their former love and intimacy, they were not many minutes in the house when he became sullen and morose towards her; nor was she more amiable towards him. He said little, but he often looked at her with an indignant eye, as she reproached him for having so rashly enlisted, to abandon her and his unborn baby, assuring him that she would never part from him while life and power lasted.

Though it could not be denied that she possessed both beauty and an attractive person, there was yet a silly vixen humour about her, ill calculated to conciliate. I did not, therefore, wonder to hear that Nocton had married her with reluctance; I only regretted that the parish officers were so inaccessible to commiseration, and so void of conscience, as to be guilty of rendering the poor fellow miserable for life, to avert the hazard of the child becoming a burden on the parish.

The ferryman and his wife endeavoured to reconcile them to their lot; and the recruit, who appeared to be

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naturally reckless and generous, seemed willing to be appeased; but his weak companion was capricious and pettish. On one occasion, when a sudden shower beat hard against the window, she cried out with little regard to decorum that she would go no farther that night.

"You may do as you please, Mary Blake," said Nocton; "but go I must, for the detachment marches to-morrow morning. It was only to give you time to prepare to come with me, that the captain consented to let me remain so late in town."

She, however, only remonstrated bitterly at his cruelty, in forcing her to travel in her condition, and in such weather. Nocton refused to listen to her, but told her somewhat doggedly, more so than was consistent with the habitual cheerful cast of his physiognomy, that "although he had already been ruined by her, he trusted she had not the power to make him a deserter." He then went out, and remained some time alone. When he returned, his appearance was surprisingly changed; his face was of an ashy paleness; his eyes bright, febrile, and eager; and his lip quivered as he said,

"Come, Mary, I can wait no longer; the boat is ready, the river is not so wild, and the rain is over."

In vain she protested; he was firm; and she had no option, but either to go or to be left behind. The old ferryman accompanied them to the boat, saw them embark, and gave the recruit some instructions how to manage the ropes, as it was still rather early in the tide. On returning into the house, he remarked facetiously to his wife,

"I can never see why young men should be always blamed, and all pity reserved for the damsels."

At this moment a rattling shower of rain and hail burst like a platoon of small shot on the window, and a flash of vivid lightning was followed by one of the most tremendous peals of thunder I have ever heard.

"Hark!" cried the old woman startling, "was not that a shriek?"

We listened, but the cry was not repeated; we rushed to the door, but no other sound was heard but the raging

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of the river, and the roar of the sea-waves breaking on the bar.

Dick soon after came home, and the boat having swung back to her station, I embarked with him, and reached the opposite inn, where I soon went to bed. Scarcely had I laid my head on the pillow, when a sudden inexplicable terror fell upon me; I shook with an unknown horror; I was, as it were, conscious that some invisible being was hovering beside me, and could hardly muster fortitude enough to refrain from rousing the house. At last I fell asleep; it was perturbed and unsound; strange dreams and vague fears scared me awake, and in them were dreadful images of a soldier murdering a female, and open graves, and gibbet-irons swinging in the wind. My remembrance has no parallel to such another night.

In the morning, the cloud on my spirit was gone, and I rose at my accustomed hour, and cheerily resumed my journey. It was a bright morning, all things were glittering and fresh in the rising sun, the recruit and his damsel were entirely forgotten, and I thought no more of them.

But when the night returned next year, I was seized with an unaccountable dejection; it weighed me down; I tried to shake it off, but was unable; the mind was diseased, and could no more by resolution shake off its discomfort, than the body by activity can expel a fever. I retired to my bed greatly depressed, but nevertheless I fell asleep. At midnight, however, I was summoned to awake by a hideous and indefinable terror; it was the same vague consciousness of some invisible visiter being near that I had once before experienced, as I have described, and I again recollected Nocton and Mary Blake: in the same instant I saw—for I cannot now believe that it was less than apparitional—the unhappy pair reproaching one another. As I looked, questioning the integrity of my sight, the wretched bride turned round and looked at me. How shall I express my horror, when, for the ruddy beauty which she once possessed, I beheld the charnel visage of a

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scull. I started up and cried aloud with such alarming vehemence, that the whole inmates of the house, with lights in their hands, were instantly in the room—shame would not let me tell what I had seen, and, endeavouring to laugh, I accused the nightmare of the disturbance.

This happened while I was at a watering-place on the west coast. I was living in a boarding-house with several strangers; among them was a tall pale German gentleman, of a grave impressive physiognomy. He was the most intelligent and shrewdest observer I have ever met with, and he had to a singular degree the gift of a discerning spirit. In the morning, when we rose from the breakfast-table, he took me by the arm, and led me out upon the lawn in front of the house; and when we were at some distance from the rest of the company, said,

"Excuse me, sir, for I must ask an impertinent question. Was it indeed the dream of the nightmare that alarmed you last night?"

"I have no objection to answer you freely; but tell me, first, why you ask such a question?"

"It is but reasonable. I had a friend who was a painter; none ever possessed an imagination which discerned better how nature in her mysteries should appear. One of his pictures was the scene of Brutus, when his evil genius summoned him to Philippi, and, strange to tell, you bear some resemblance to the painted Brutus. When, with the others, I broke into your room last night, you looked so like the Brutus in his picture, that I could have sworn you were amazed with the vision of a ghost."

I related to him what I have now done to you.

"It is wonderful," said he, "what inconceivable sympathy hath linked you to the fate of these unhappy persons. There is something more in this renewed visitation than the phantasma of a dream."

The remark smote me with an uncomfortable sensation of dread, and for a short time my flesh crawled, as

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it were, upon my bones. But the impression soon wore off, and was again entirely forgotten.

When the anniversary again returned, I was seized with the same heaviness and objectless horror of mind; it hung upon me with bodings and auguries until I went to bed, and then, after my first sleep, I was a third time aroused by another fit of the same inscrutable panic. On this occasion, however, the vision was different. I beheld only Nocton, pale and wounded, stretched on a bed, and on the coverlet lay a pair of new epaulettes, as if just unfolded from a paper.

For seven years I was thus annually afflicted. The vision in each was different, but I saw no more of Mary Blake. On the fourth occasion I beheld Nocton sitting in the uniform of aid-de-camp at a table, with the customary tokens of conviviality before him; it was only part of a scene, such as one beholds in a mirror.

On the fifth occasion he appeared to be ascending, sword in hand, the rampart of a battery; the sun was setting behind him, and the shadows and forms of a strange land, with the domes and pagodas of an oriental country, lay in wide extent around; it was as a picture, but far more vivid than painting can exhibit.

On the sixth time he appeared again stretched upon a couch; his complexion was sullen, not from wounds, but disease, and there appeared at his bedside the figure of a general officer, with a star at his breast, with whose conversation he appeared pleased, though languid.

But on the seventh and last occasion on which the horrors of the visions were repeated, I saw him on horseback in a field of battle; and while I looked at him, he was struck on the face by a sabre, and the blood flowed down upon his regimentals.

Years passed after this, during which I had none of these dismal exhibitions. My mind and memory resumed their healthful tone. I recollected, without these intervening years of oblivion, Nocton and Mary Blake, occasionally, as one thinks of things past, and I told my friends of the curious periodical returns of the visitations to me as a remarkable metaphysical phenomenon.

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By an odd coincidence, it so happened that my German friend was always present when I related my dreams. He, in the intervals, sometimes spoke to me of them, but my answers were vague, for my reminiscences were imperfect. It was not so with him. All I told he distinctly recorded and preserved in a book, wherein he wrote down the minutest things that I had witnessed in my visions. I do not mention his name, because he is a modest and retiring man, in bad health, and who has long sequestered himself from company. His rank, however, is so distinguished, that his name could not be stated without the hazard of exposing him to impertinent curiosity. But to proceed.

Exactly fourteen years—twice seven it was—I remember well, because for the first seven I had been haunted as I have described, and for the other seven I had been placed in my living. At the end of that period of fourteen years my German friend paid me a visit here. He came in the forenoon, and we spent an agreeable day together, for he was a man of much recondite knowledge. I have seen none so wonderfully possessed of all sorts of occult learning.

He was an astrologer of the true kind, for in him it was not a pretence, but a science; he scorned horoscopes and fortunetellers, with the just derision of a philosopher, but he had a beautiful conception of the reciprocal dependencies of nature. He affected not to penetrate to causes, but he spoke of effects with a luminous and religious eloquence. He described to me how the tides followed the phases of the moon; but he denied the Newtonian notion, that they were caused by the procession of the lunar changes. He explained to me, that when the sun entered Aries, and the other signs of the zodiac, how his progression could be traced on this earth by the development of plants and flowers, and the passions, diseases, and affections of animals and man; but that the stars were more than the celestial signs of these terrestrial phenomena, he ridiculed as the conception of theory.

His learning in the curious art of alchymy was equally

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sublime. He laughed at the fancy of an immortal elixir, and his notion of the mythology of the philosopher's stone was the very essence and spirituality of ethics. The elixir of immortality he described to me as an allegory, which, from its component parts, emblems of talents and virtues, only showed that perseverance, industry, good-will, and a gift from God were the requisite ingredients necessary to attain renown. His knowledge of the philosopher's stone was still more beautiful. He referred to the writings of the Rosicrucians, whose secrets were couched in artificial symbols, to prove that the sages of that sect were not the fools whom the less wise of later days would represent them. The self-denial, the patience, the humility, the trusting in God, the treasuring of time by lamp and calculation, which the venerable alchymists recommended, he used to say, were the only elements which constitute the conduct of the youth that would attain to riches and honour; and these different stages, which are illuminated in the alchymical volumes as descriptive of stages in the process of making the stone, were but hieroglyphical devices to explain the effects of well-applied human virtue and industry.

To me it was amazing to what clear simplicity he reduced all things, and on what a variety of subjects his bright and splendid fancy threw a fair and affecting light. All those demi-sciences—physiognomy, palmistry, scaileology, &c., even magic and witchcraft, obtained from his interpretations a philosophical credibility.

In disquisitions on these subjects we spent the anniversary. He had by them enlarged the periphery of my comprehension; he had added to my knowledge, and inspired me with a profounder respect for himself.

He was an accomplished musician, in the remotest, if I may use the expression, depths of the art. His performance on the piano-forte was simple, heavy, and seemingly the labour of an unpractised hand, but his expression was, beyond all epithet, exquisite and solemn; his airs were grave, devotional, and pathetic, consisting

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of the simplest harmonic combinations; but they were wonderful: every note was a portion of an invocation; every melody the voice of a passion or a feeling supplied with elocution.

We had spent the day in the fields, where he illustrated his astrological opinions by appeals to plants, and leaves, and flowers, and other attributes of the season, with such delightful perspicuity, that no time can efface from the registers of my memory the substance of his discourses. In the evening he delighted me with his miraculous music; and, as the night advanced, I was almost persuaded that he was one of those extraordinary men who are said sometimes to acquire communion with spirits and dominion over demons.

Just as we were about to sit down to our frugal supper, literally or philosophically so, as if it had been served for Zeno himself, Dick, the son of the old ferryman, who by this time was some years dead, came to the door and requested to speak with me in private. Of course I obeyed, when he informed me that he had brought across the ferry that night a gentleman officer, from a far country, who was in bad health, and whom he could not accommodate properly in the ferry-house.

"The inn," said Dick, "is too far off, for he is lame, and has an open wound in the thigh. I have therefore ventured to bring him here, sure that you will be glad to give him a bed for the night. His servant tells me that he was esteemed the bravest officer in all the service of the Mysore of India."

It was impossible to resist this appeal. I went to the door where the gentleman was waiting, and with true-heartedness expressed how great my satisfaction would be if my house could afford him any comfort.

I took him in with me to the room where my German friend was sitting. I was much pleased with the gentleness and unaffected simplicity of his manners.

He was a handsome middle-aged man—his person was robust and well formed—his features had been originally handsome, but they were disfigured by a scar, which had materially changed their symmetry. His

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conversation was not distinguished by any remarkable intelligence; but after the high intellectual excitement which I had enjoyed all day with my philosophical companion, it was agreeable and gentlemanly.

Several times during supper something came across my mind, as if I had seen him before, but I could neither recollect when nor where; and I observed that more than once he looked at me as if under the influence of some research in his memory. At last I observed that his eyes were dimmed with tears, which assured me that he then recollected me. But I considered it a duty of hospitality not to inquire aught concerning him more than he was pleased to tell himself.

In the mean time my German friend, I perceived, was watching us both, but suddenly he ceased to be interested, and appeared absorbed in thought, while good manners required me to make some efforts to entertain my guest. This led to some inquiry concerning the scene of his services, and he told us that he had been many years in India.

"On this day eight years ago," said he, "I was in the battle of Borupknow, where I received the wound which has so disfigured me in the face."

At that moment I accidentally threw my eyes upon my German friend—the look which he gave me in answer caused me to shudder from head to foot, and I began to ruminate of Nocton the recruit and Mary Blake, while my friend continued the conversation in a light desultory manner, as it would have seemed to any stranger; but to me it was awful and oracular. He spoke to the stranger on all manner of topics, but ever and anon he brought him back, as if without design, to speak of the accidents of fortune which had befallen him on the anniversary of that day; giving it as a reason for his curious remarks, that most men observed anniversaries, time and experience having taught them to notice that there were curious coincidences with respect to times, and places, and individuals,—things which of themselves form part of the great demonstration of the wisdom and skill displayed in the construction, not only

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of the mechanical but the moral world, showing that each was a portion of one and the same thing.

"I have been," said he to the stranger, "an observer and recorder of such things. I have my book of registration here in this house; I will fetch it from my bedchamber, and we shall see in what other things, as far as your fortunes have been concerned, how it corresponds with the accidents of your life on this anniversary."

I observed that the stranger paled a little at this proposal, and said, with an affectation of carelessness, while he was evidently disturbed, that he would see it in the morning. But the philosopher was too intent upon his purpose to forbear. I know not what came upon me, but I urged him to bring the book. This visibly disconcerted the stranger still more, and his emotion became, as it were, a motive which induced me, in a peremptory manner, to require the production of the book, for I felt that strange horror, so often experienced, returning upon me, and was constrained by an irresistible impulse to seek an explanation of the circumstances by which I had for so many years suffered such an eclipse of mind. The stranger seeing how intent both of us were, desisted from his wish to procrastinate the curious disclosure which my friend said he could make; but it was evident he was not at ease. Indeed he was so much the reverse, that when the German went for his book, he again proposed to retire, and only consented to abide by my jocular entreaty, until he should learn what his future fortunes were to be, by the truth of what would be told him of the past.

My friend soon returned with the book. It was a remarkable volume, covered with vellum, shut with three brazen clasps, secured by a lock of curious construction. Altogether, it was a strange, antique, and necromantic-looking volume. The corner was studded with knobs of brass, with a small mirror in the centre, round which were inscribed, in Teutonic characters, words to the effect, "I WILL SHOW THEE THYSELF." Before unlocking the clasp, my friend gave the book to the

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stranger, explained some of the emblematic devices which adorned the cover, and particularly the words of the motto that surrounded the little mirror.

Whether it was from design or that the symbols required it, the explanations of my friend were mystical and abstruse; and I could see that they produced an effect on the stranger so strong that it was evident he could with difficulty maintain his self-possession. The colour entirely faded from his countenance; he became wan and cadaverous, and his hand shook violently as he returned the volume to the philosopher, who, on receiving it back, said,—

"There are things in this volume which may not be revealed to every eye, yet to those who may not discover to what they relate they will seem trivial notations."

He then applied the key to the lock, and unclosed the volume. My stranger guest began to breathe hard and audibly. The German turned over the vellum leaves, searchingly and carefully. At last he found his record and description of my last vision, which he read aloud. It was not only minute in the main circumstances in which I had seen Nocton, but it contained an account of many things, the still-life, as it is called, of the picture, which I had forgotten, and among other particulars a picturesque account of the old general whom I saw standing at the bedside.

"By all that's holy," cried the stranger, "it is old Cripplington himself! the queue of his hair was, as you say, always crooked, owing to a habit he had of pulling it when vexed; where could you find the description of all this?"

I was petrified; I sat motionless as a statue, but a fearful vibration thrilled through my whole frame.

My friend looked back in his book, and found the description of my sixth vision. It contained the particulars of the crisis of battle, in which, as the stranger described, he had received the wound in his face. It affected him less than the other, but still the effect upon him was impressive.

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The record of the fifth vision produced a more visible alarm. The description was vivid to an extreme degree,—the appearance of Nocton, sword in hand, on the rampart—the animation of the assault, and the gorgeous landscape of domes and pagodas was limned with words as vividly as a painter could have made the scene. The stranger seemed to forget his anxiety, and was delighted with the reminiscences which the description recalled.

But when the record of the fourth vision was read, wherein Nocton was described as sitting in the regimentals of an aid-de-camp, at a convivial table, he exclaimed, as if unconscious of his words,—

"It was on that night I had first the honour of dining with the general."

The inexorable philosopher proceeded, and read what I had told him of Nocton, stretched pale and wounded on a bed, with new epaulettes spread on the coverlet, as if just unfolded from a paper. The stranger started from his seat, and cried, with a hollow and fearful voice,—

"This is the book of life."

The German turned over to the second vision, which he read slowly and mournfully, especially the description of my own feelings, when I beheld the charnel visage of Mary Blake. The stranger, who had risen from his seat, and was panting with horror, cried out with a shrill halloo, as it were,—

"On that night I was sitting in my tent, methought her spirit came and reproached me."

I could not speak; but my German friend rose from his seat, and holding the volume in his left hand, touched it with his right, and looking sternly at the stranger, said,—

"In this volume, and in your own conscience, are the evidences which prove that you are Ralph Nocton, and that on this night, twice seven years ago, you murdered Mary Blake."

The miserable stranger lost all self-command, and, staggering from the spot, fell.

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THE THREE KEARNEYS.

A TALE OF THE DOMINIE.*

BY ANDREW PICKEN.

CHAPTER I.

How happy might the wise and virtuous live
Were 't not for wicked hearts that prowl the earth
To turn its bliss to misery.—*Scraps.*

It was a sad gliff that, that I once got by an affair that occurred in the Irish country while I took up my abode there; and it put my nerves more out of the way than I can well describe now, as I am only recollecting the matter as a by-past fact. But such a sight as a father and two sons, an old gray-headed man, and I may say his whole family, going all together, as I saw them go past my door, and in my view, and that of thousands, is such as I hope never to see the like of again; although I do not think that the world is growing better in these last days half so fast as I could wish it should. Indeed, I am of opinion that the world must still be a bad world, for all the pains that have been taken with it, else such things could never have hap-

* "The machinery of 'The Dominie's Legacy' is soon described: a benevolent and well-informed Scottish village schoolmaster becomes independent by the means of a property left him by one of his pupils, and is thereby enabled to gratify a favourite propensity to ramble on foot throughout the country; a habit in which he had previously indulged as much as possible during the recesses of his school avocations. Tales, for the most part connected with the incident and character he is supposed to encounter in these peregrinations, he bequeathed to a friend for publication, and hence the title of the work," &c. —*Westminster Review*, vol. xiii.

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pened as I am now musing over, and which makes my heart ache to think of. If any one wishes to know what the affair was, let him sit down with me, and I will tell him as well as I can the whole story.

It was while I was living within the interior precincts of the flaunting city of Dublin, in the Irish kingdom, that I first began seriously to make my observations on things in general: so, wandering to and fro to observe the city as much as possible at a distance, rather than in its inner embraces, my walks lay often in those southern environs of the place that spread off so pleasantly towards the green sloping hills, joining the King's county, which the Irish, in their usual boastful phraseology, choose to dignify by the name of the Dublin mountains. On that side of the city, and on a pleasant elevation, is situated the healthy village of Harold's Cross; and beyond the village towards the said mountains appear the picturesque policies of Robert Shawfield, Esq., of the Warren, some time a representative in parliament for the Irish metropolis.

Now there lived by the road-side beyond Harold's Cross, and near to the fine domain of the Warren, an elderly man and woman, of the name of Kearney, who had two strapping sons living at home with them. These young men bore, however, rather a ne'er-do-well character; and in fact the whole of the Kearneys were known extensively round as a suspicious and troublesome sort of people. Yet were they, after all, rather well liked and applauded by their own sort of rabbling clan-jamfrey of the neighbourhood, more, for aught I know, because they neither feared God nor regarded man, than for any good or commendable qualities. The old woman (her name was Judith, or rather Judy, as the people called her) was well named after that strong-stomached amazon who cut off the head of the man with whom she went to consort herself, as we read of in the Apocrypha; for she was known all round to be a perfect born devil; and like many other of the parents of the Irish youth, able to bring up her sons in the practice of all manner of malice and wickedness.

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We cannot say that the old man was quite as bad as his amiable helpmate (for without doubt she, as her neighbours would say, was "a sweet nut"), and it was even affirmed that he had occasionally in his life manifested sundry symptoms of a reckless sort of Irish generosity. Besides, the father of this hopeful family had no imagination to invent a wicked plot, yet still he was of a dour and dogged turn, had within him a deep spirit of suspicion and of vengeance; and if he deserved not the praise of having the head to conceive, it could not be denied that he had the hand to execute the darkest scheme of guilt and cruelty.

In adverting to the subject of the perfectibility of man, particularly in Ireland, it hath always appeared to me an exceedingly wise and reasonable proposal, that in order to purify the character of the Irish youth of the lower orders, we should begin by shooting all the parents with a cannon; at least this was the plan of a most reasonable and humane person, who lived about the times of the celebrated Irish dean, and who had more wisdom than I think it at all convenient to pretend to. But not being versed in metaphysics, so as to entitle me to insist upon the execution of this sensible project, the story leads me simply to observe, that at least the young Kearneys, of whom we are now speaking, could not be expected to imbibe much of the spirit of godliness and honesty from the walk and conversation of such parents.

Accordingly, "the boys" were persons of what philosophers would call "a mixed character;" that is to say, they had the usual semi-barbarous virtues of the Irish mountaineer, generous, hospitable, and warm towards those whom they chose for the moment to delight in; but savage and selfish when the fit was over. Still, however, they were rather handsome boys, had the wild and roving eye of the southern Hibernian, with the showy, spluttering, and sploring manner of the ordinary native. A full share of the bad dispositions of mankind they certainly had inherited, to qualify them for villains; yet still it must have been by their amiable

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parents alone that these youths were fully instructed in the mystery of iniquity.

The Kearneys had a cow, which lived abroad about the neighbourhood, and some half a dozen pigs, which lived at home with the family. How the pigs got their living, or indeed the Kearneys themselves, was by no means clearly made out by the most sagacious of the people in the cabins around. But as for the cow, it was no secret, that although an honest and discreet-looking brute as needed be, she was universally allowed to be a common interloper and a thief, getting her living wherever she could, or rather wherever she was driven, and bringing disgrace and a blush upon all the well-disposed cows from Harold's Cross to the Dublin mountains. This cow was a constant subject of eyesore and dispute throughout the neighbourhood, and in particular by the servants and retainers of Mr. Shawfield, of the Warren; for the grass which grew so rich upon the broad meadows of his estate, she had always been peculiarly fond of; and to this predilection the four Kearneys never were known to have made the smallest objection. Mr. Shawfield himself, who knew the character of the Kearneys well, issued several strong proclamations against them and their cow, but to these they were too audacious to pay any attention; and as for his own people, whose duty it was to have curbed or punished such doings, they stood too much in awe of the Kearneys themselves to take any active side against them.

At this time there lived in the neighbourhood, and on the further side of the Warren demesne, a widow woman, who, together with her two daughters, then living at home with her, were held in much favour by the squire; the father of the girls having been long a faithful domestic of the family, and the widow and children being uniformly industrious and deserving. This woman excited some envy in the neighbourhood, not only from the decided favour shown to her by the squire, but from the way in which she chose to bring up her daughters, whom it was thought she was rearing

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with a cleanliness very much above their condition. But this neighbourly envy began insensibly to merge into admiration and respect as the girls grew to womanhood; for though they all lived in much isolation in their cottage near the foot of the Dublin mountains, they were so decidedly superior to all the young women around, that they tacitly came to be held up for a pattern, and one of them, the eldest, began to be quite distinguished and talked of for her beauty.

It was not for a long time known who was the favoured one of all those that now eagerly sought the company of Mattie Connor; and the secret was first discovered by the attentive Mr. Shawfield himself, who, with the virtuous anxiety of a benevolent landlord, kept a sharp watch over the fate of a dependant of so interesting a character. He recognised by accident, but with perfect approval, the lover of Mattie in the person of an active young fellow, the son of one of his most respected tenants; and he secretly resolved, if the youth continued to act as praiseworthily as he had begun, to make him an object of his favour and promotion. This he was the more disposed to do, as Owen Lambert, the young man, had, of his own accord, shown a firmness and a spirit in resisting the provoking freedoms of the Kearneys, such as no one but himself had ventured to attempt. The first thing, therefore, Mr. Shawfield did was to make Owen Lambert his grieve or park-ranger, intrusting him with the charge of the whole of his policies, and directing his attention, particularly, to the wanton and insulting intrusions of the Kearneys and others, who made repeated depredations on his property.

This new situation, thus conferred upon Lambert, rendered him peculiarly obnoxious to the whole of the Kearneys, who saw in his spirit and indefatigable activity an obstacle and a check of no trifling power to their hindrance in their various impudent proceedings. It happened also, about this time, that the eldest of the two younger Kearneys (his name was Pat) having thought fit, as was seldom the case, to accept of a few

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days' labour on a farm beyond the Warren, and near to the clean cottage of the widow, set his eyes, for the first time to take particular notice of her, upon the handsome and happy Mattie Connor, and getting at once into a natural sort of savage love, boldly and ardently tried for Mattie's acquaintance.

The reception that Pat Kearney's audacious addresses received from so gentle a spirit as Mattie need not be described, particularly as both sisters had been well warned against such company by their mother, the quiet and careful widow of the cottage. The spirit of Kearney was of course too radically bad, and his ignorance too much approaching to ruffian barbarism, to enable him to see or account for, with any thing like fairness, the cause and the reasonableness of his decided repulse. So he brooded over his mortification with a sour and grudgeful gloom; and being, like most bad youths, the pet of his mother, to that amiable lady he soon imparted the cause of his sullen looks and his bitter chagrin.

The peculiar curse of conscious wickedness was no new thing to the mother of the Kearneys, that is, the continual dread of being avoided by the good, and the abiding sense that they deserve to be avoided. Amid, therefore, her envious wrath at the gentle and inoffensive widow of the cottage, the beldam had the sagacity to conclude, that some one must be favoured with the love of Mattie Connor, and a thought having crossed the suspicious brooding of the moment, a strong curiosity took fast hold of her to know if the person could possibly be the squire's active and daring confidant, Owen Lambert. Disdaining to make inquiries of the neighbours, most of whom avoided much familiarity with her or with her dreaded family, she, with the indefinite purpose and dogged perseverance of a malevolent spirit, went night after night, for several trials, to ascertain of a surety, for her inward satisfaction, whether Owen Lambert actually was the youth who, as she had learned, was frequently seen, under the cloud of night, to steal from the lone cottage where Mattie and her mother dwelt.

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It so happened, that for several nights at this time Owen Lambert's duty had prevented him from seeing his Mattie; but on the fourth or fifth he appeared, to gladden all the inmates of the cottage, and to carry to his sweetheart the pleasing news of the squire's perfect approbation of their union, and of his having given orders for the preparation of a comfortable cottage for their reception, which stood near the centre of the policies of the Warren, and which was expected to be ready for them in less than a fortnight. After partaking of some refreshment with the kind inmates of the cottage, Lambert took his leave, intending to proceed towards home, but Mattie slipped out to be his convoy through the field towards the lane, from the natural wish to enjoy a little talk by themselves, and the parting embrace of him who was so soon to be her own for ever.

As they crossed the field which led towards the road, their whisper, so interesting to both, was somewhat interrupted by their accidentally observing a shapeless figure moving, or rather stealing along, by the fence beside them. There was scarcely any moon, the figure was in the shadow just by the hedge, and the place being lonesome, and no thoroughfare near, so unexpected an apparition filled both the youth and his betrothed with some apprehension. As they drew near to the stile that parted them from the road Lambert stood still, determined to wait until the figure would come up, and to address to it the usual challenge of civility.

"God save you, friend!" was his natural address, as the woman came up, after the manner of the common people in the country parts of Ireland.

"God save you kindly!" was the hypocritical response of the mother of the Kearneys, and when she came up, and the dull moonbeam discovered the features of the well-known and detested old woman, a shuddering feeling came involuntarily over both of the lovers, from an apprehension that there was something which boded no good to either, in this her unexpected presence and observation.

"It is far from Harold's Cross for you to be at this

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hour, Mrs. Kearney," said Lambert, civilly; "but maybe ye have lost your way as ye crossed from the mountains. It's a darkish night sure, for all the pretension of a moon."

"Mind the moulahan at your side, and never mind me, Mr. Lambert," said the old woman, saucily, as she stepped over the stile; "and there's moon enough yet to light me to Harold's Cross, if I want to go; but sure ye's both can see to kiss by the moon's glimmer that shows at night where the bog is blackest, although ye's maybe may have less light than will serve you to keep the four corners of the Warren free from 'cute cattle that ken the differ between the squire's grass and the cotter's cabbage." Thus saying, the old woman went muttering away, and before the lovers could recover their momentary surprise, she was lost in the dark winding of the narrow lane.

"There is something that I do not like forbodes me about that wicked old woman," said Mattie Connor, laying her hand with alarm on her breast. "I wish no sad thing be yet to happen us, Owen," she added, looking anxiously in the young man's countenance.

"Pooh! never fear, my jewel Mattie," said Lambert, gayly; and soon by further expostulation he succeeded in quelling the fears of his anxious lass. Thus with their usual tenderness they parted for the night, forgetting in pleasanter thoughts this ill-boding encounter.

On the same night three fine sheep were stolen from the flock in the Warren park; and when the old woman arrived at home she found her sons washing carefully the blood from off their hands; the supper that already fried on the cottage fire was seasoned with the full tale of her discovery, and sundry taunts and hints, and half-intimated threatenings, addressed to her sons, that made the eyes of the three men flash with a fiendish expression, sadly predicted what was afterward to be consummated.

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CHAPTER II.

Several weeks after this, however, passed quietly away, and now Owen Lambert and Mattie Connor were married and happy, and living in the pleasant honeymoon of their union in the pretty cottage that had been prepared for them in the middle of the Warren policy. The whole neighbourhood seemed disposed to rejoice in their union, from Harold's Cross to the Dublin mountains, excepting, indeed, the Kearney family, whose envy and malice exceeded all bounds, and only wanted an occasion to break out into some deed which should glut and gratify the infernal spirit to which these wretched people had now entirely given way. This feeling of demoniac hate was aggravated, if possible, by the very forbearance, clemency, and advocacy in their favour with the squire of the sensible and considerate grieve of the Warren; and by their being made sensible that he had fully traced the theft of the three sheep to them, and had partly concealed it, and partly taken the blame of their loss upon himself on account of his temporary absence from the grounds at the time—he wishing, by fair means and faithful vigilance in future to prevent, if possible, any further cause of difference between the Kearneys and his master.

But all this cautious and indulgent conduct only served to deepen the hatred of the infatuated family, whose malignant spirit seemed to brood day and night over the provoking good conduct and still more provoking success of the attentive grieve. The praises which the people of the neighbourhood lavished on the young couple for their looks, as they now appeared in their well-saved clothes of a Sunday, walking arm-in-arm so lovingly past the Kearneys' very door, to and from the Protestant church in Harold's Cross, was like worm-

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wood to the envious spirit of the three men, and stung them to madness as it was weekly repeated in their ears. Yet, with all their malice, the natural dread with which cowardly vice always regards open-fronted virtue and manly good conduct, together with the firm threatening of the squire, so awed the Kearneys, that they dared not drive their cow into the parks of the Warren as they were used to do, and made them waver in their half-formed purposes of vengeful audacity. But the cow, now being expelled from every field and enclosure round, began to be much in want of grass, and to give a stinted measure of the dairy produce, which made the old woman murmur and mutter at the vigilant grieve, and soon to taunt her hopeful "boys" for their cowardly meanness to think of paying for cow's grass so long as there was so much of it growing rich upon the meadows "of the Warren beyant," which might give them all many a meal of good milk for nothing, if it was not for their own chicken-hearted pusillanimity, "the devil save them."

It was not hard to advise "the boys" to any outrage which might give provocation to the favoured grieve; so on the morning of the next day, the two in person openly drove their vexatious cow into one of the very best parks of the Warren. By the orders of the grieve, if obeyed to the letter, he might at once have pounded the cow, and left the Kearneys to seek their remedy; but having been warned to take care of proceeding to any extremity against such dangerous persons, by the foreboding anxiety of his anxious young wife, he only drove the cow from the park, and even went in person on the same evening to the Kearneys' cottage, to expostulate with them against persisting in proceedings so likely to bring trouble and ruin upon themselves. When he entered their cabin he unfortunately found no one at home but the hardened old woman, and to his earnest and almost beseeching warning, of what would be the sure result to her husband and sons, if they desisted not from their insulting trespasses, she only replied with a taunting sneer and a heap of reproaches

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upon "the garsoon," for his persevering zeal in the execution of his duty.

Two days more had not passed over when the cow was again found grazing in the same park, and was forthwith driven to the pound, after the whole affair had been laid before the squire. Determined no longer to submit to these repeated outrages, Mr. Shawfield resolved to follow out and punish this last offence with the utmost rigour, particularly as it had been accompanied by a wanton breaking of his fences, such as never before had been attempted, and of which his faithful grieve had himself managed to be the eyewitness. Besides, therefore, putting the Kearneys to the usual expenses of the pound, which they paid with dark and uncompunctious reluctance, provoked by their saucy and threatening manner, the squire further resolved to make an example of this family, and accordingly summoned the father and eldest son to a court in Dublin, to answer to the charge of a wanton trespass, the grieve being of course the chief yet reluctant witness against them.

The news of the approaching trial of the Kearneys, when it came cautiously to the ears of the young wife of the grieve, filled her with an involuntary and anxious apprehension. She feared something, she knew not what; she wished the trial was over, and yet she scarcely knew why; for Mr. Shawfield had given her assurances of the utmost favour and protection to her deserving husband, and had himself called to see her, and to give her his word to that effect. Still, as the day drew near when Owen Lambert was to go to Dublin, she could not divest herself of her foreboding anxiety; for dreadful reports had come to her ears of the horrible threatenings that the Kearneys had been heard to utter against the humane yet vigilant youth. The personal situation of the young wife now helped to increase her tendency to nervous anxiety, and though by day her mind was soothed by argument and assurance, by night her fancy was haunted with every sort of terrifying image. She had often heard, with a feminine

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shudder, of the dreadful atrocities of Irish revenge committed in the wild parts of her unfortunate country; and whenever she tried to sleep, as she lay at midnight listening for sound or tread without her lonely cottage, dark horrors, burnings, and murders haunted her disturbed slumbers; but when she was awoke by some startling shriek of her imaginary terrors, and found Owen sleeping placidly by her side, she would clasp him to her bosom with the thankful fondness of a wife, and thus fall asleep, again uttering murmurs of gratitude to Heaven for his safety.

CHAPTER III.

At length the day arrived, previous to the one appointed for the hearing of the charge against the Kearneys; and some reports having been current that this pestiferous family were likely from hence to be forced entirely from the neighbourhood, gave confidence and spirits to the anxious wife, so that the day wore over with unusual comfort. In the afternoon, the young couple were visited at their cottage by widow Connor, Mattie's mother, who staid with them till after nightfall, and the evening was spent with affectionate and gay hilarity. At length the mother-in-law rose to depart, and Owen rose also in order to accompany her at least part of the way across the fields towards her cottage. But when he went to the door, and, opening it, looked out upon the dark sky and across the obscure fields as far as he could see, and heard the low wind sighing through the sweeping planting, and the murmur of the distant river which hummed beyond the Warren, a pulse of involuntary dread struck at his heart, and he felt this night a reluctance to intrust himself without, such as he never before remembered to have come over him. But he did not express any thing to indicate this in the

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presence of his wife, although he went without and looked round, and came in again, and appeared thoughtful and restless, and did not move for some time after the widow had intimated her intention to leave the cottage.

His wife was somewhat struck with his manner, and at first made an objection to his going with her mother, which he, in the spirit of hospitable courage, would by no means listen to; so her former fears having by this time been much dispelled, she made little opposition, and with an affectionate look in her face as he parted from her, away he went to be convoy to the widow, with many charges from Mattie, that if he observed nothing which might require his presence without, he should speedily return, to enjoy his rest and her advice before what was to take place on the following day.

Lambert had not gone far from the door across the fields, the young wife being left in the cottage alone, when the thought smote her that she ought not to have allowed her Owen to leave his own home at night, at least until the trial was over. An ominous dread now came over her concerning him, and she began to feel an anxiety for his safety that became perfectly intolerable. All the usual reasonings in such circumstances she called in to check the intensity of her uneasy apprehensions, as she waited with impatience in the empty dwelling, and listened eagerly, trying to hear his distant footsteps. An hour—two hours passed entirely away and still she listened, until she could audibly hear the hard beating of her own heart, but no other sound was there to indicate his coming, or to relieve the dreadful horror of her fevered imaginings. She went out from the cottage door with the lamp in her hand. It cast a feeble and limited glance towards the dark meadows, but all lay shrouded in silence and obscurity, and he whom she looked for came not. As it wore towards midnight without his making his appearance, the young woman sat like a statue in the midst of her terrors, or paced about the cottage in incipient distraction. She next seized the little cloak that hung by the

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wall, and throwing it round her, rushed into the dark fields to seek for her husband.

She wandered some way over the wet grass, and still she could see no one; but sometimes, as she stopped to listen, she thought she could hear the voices of men in the dark distance, and clamours, and struggling sounds seemed to come over her eager ear, and again she thought she could even distinguish faint shrieks and low groans, carried upon the tell-tale wings of the passing blast. But this reality or fancy was too much for her nerves to bear, and she stood for a time stock still in the meadow. The cold wind of midnight now blew chill in her face, and nameless terrors came with more than freezing power over her heart, until becoming alarmed lest she should faint beside the planting, she made a great effort to retrace her steps, and with much difficulty was barely able to reach her empty and disconsolate dwelling.

It is not for me to attempt to describe how the poor young woman got over this dreadful night. But hour after hour passed like ages away, and when daylight came without the return of her Owen, she lost the sense of her distress in the relief of overpowering insensibility. In this state was Mattie Lambert found by a neighbour, who came to inquire for her husband before his going to Dublin to attend the much-talked-of trial of the Kearneys.

Mr. Shawfield at this time was living in his house in Dublin, and being much interested in the present business, from the repeated annoyances of the Kearneys, was early in court on this morning of the trial, or rather of the simple exhibition of a charge to which they were bound over to appear, and took his seat on the bench near the magistrates for the hearing. The case was soon called, but though he had observed the Kearneys to be early in court, his faithful grieve had not yet made his appearance. Something unknown might have prevented the witness's early attendance, and the squire got the case put off till a late hour in the day, and now he became seriously uneasy, for still

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Owen Lambert appeared not. The magistrate was now ready for this last case, and, unable to delay the hearing, went somewhat into the charge in the case—but on the principal witness being again repeatedly called in court, still the grieve appeared not.

The anxious squire looked among the crowd in vain, and an impudent sneer was manifest in the countenances of the three Kearneys, their beldam-mother, who stood behind, regarding with laughter the aldermen on the bench. While the court now consulted as to the propriety of dismissing this case for want of evidence, the elder of the Kearneys looking towards the bench, and smiling saucily as he turned towards the squire, uttered this strange and impertinent speech,—

"Robert Shawfield, Esq., M. P.—where is the fine witness that ye were to have brought to swear against me and my boys? If ye have him, why don't he come forward?"

The pain that Mr. Shawfield felt at the impertinence of this speech was naught to the thought that struck him at the moment, as he gazed severely in the face of the taunting old man.

"I request that these three men," said he, "may be instantly taken into custody, under the charge at least of stealing from off my property three sheep, which I shall prove by other witnesses besides him who was to have appeared this morning against them. Heaven grant that they may have no greater guilt than this last to account for, both to God and man!"

The words had scarcely been spoken, when a messenger arrived from the Warren to inform the squire that the grieve, having left his cottage on the previous night, had never returned; and that search having been made for him every where, no traces of him were to be found, but that certain marks of a struggle had been observed on the side of a bank, and strong suspicions were every where abroad that the unfortunate man had met with a cruel death by the hands of these Kearneys, who had long used open threatenings against him. The horror of the master and friend of the deserving grieve,

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and of the whole court, at hearing this intelligence, need not be dwelt upon. Warrants were granted on the instant, both to make search for the body and to investigate carefully the marks and appearances of every thing that should be found within the cottage of the Kearneys which might furnish any evidence concerning the murder.

It was a melancholy and a tedious work, the search that took place for the lifeless body of the unfortunate young man. The cry was so unusual, and the sensation so great, that voluntary parties were formed of the people around to assist in the search, both for the sad satisfaction of the distracted widow, if she could be recovered,—for the poor creature was by this time insensible to all around her,—and to find legal evidence against the ruthless murderers. Every ditch was raked for many miles round, every pool and pond was dragged from Harold's Cross to the Dublin mountains, every spadeful of earth that had been recently dug up was moved and tried below the surface; but still all in vain. Whether the body of the grieve had been thrown into the stream that run beyond the Warren, and might have been carried towards the sea before the search commenced, or whether it could have been buried under the sands at the bottom, which prevented its ever being traced, or how else it could have been disposed of was never known, but the wretched widow never had the satisfaction of seeing even the mangled corpse of him of whom she constantly raved, nor was there legal proof exhibited of the actual murder,—for the body of Lambert was never found.

An alarming feeling came over all who knew of this murder, lest, after all, the Kearneys should, for want of evidence, be suffered to escape; for although during the search an axe had been found in their cottage, from which the blood was imperfectly cleaned, and whereon still stuck some of the clotted hair of the victim of their cruelty; and though the marks of shoes, and the print of the ribbed corduroy of a heavily set down knee, corresponding with these articles worn by the Kear-

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neys, appeared on that spot in the Warren where an evident struggle had taken place, yet the body never having been produced, with other legal defects in the evidence, gave alarming indication to the people round that the crafty Kearneys would yet get free of the capital charge. But the eye of Heaven, that neither slumbers nor sleeps, had seen during the darkness what no human eye but those engaged in the murder had been suffered to witness, and had decreed that such atrocity should not escape its punishment; and the law itself contained a clause which embraced the whole of those to whom vengeance was due. The malice of the Kearneys had been so inveterate, particularly since the pounding of their cow, and so openly manifested to all the neighbourhood, that it furnished out of their own mouths the means of their condemnation; not for the actual crime, which might not clearly have been brought home to them, but for a deliberate *conspiracy* to murder, of which there existed abundance of evidence. Upon this point, then, the whole were arraigned, and though, from some circumstance, the old woman, who was well understood to have instigated the whole, was reluctantly acquitted, the three men, namely, the father and his two sons, were tried and condemned to suffer on the very spot beyond Harold's Cross where the horrid deed was supposed to have been perpetrated.

CHAPTER IV.

I AM now come to speak of that sickening gliff that came over my heart at the sight which I witnessed one morning as I sat at my window, in the long suburban street as you go towards Harold's Cross from the city of Dublin. It was a quiet close morning, and drawing towards noon, when I sat musing at my window, as I say, and thinking within myself of God's goodness and

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man's deceits, for the day was Monday, and certain things came soothingly over my thoughts, which I had heard in the house of prayer during the solemnities of the previous day's worship. Surely, said I, goodness and mercy have still followed me all my life long, even into this discontented kingdom of the Irish; and as to the wickedness of the wicked, which is wrought in secret places of the earth, I have still been preserved even from knowing the depth and the breadth thereof.

I was communing with myself in this comforting way, and so abstract in my inward meditation, that I did not pay any attention, although I partly saw the people beginning to lift their windows all round, and those on the street beneath running hastily from that end of the suburb to which my back was all the while turned. I have been often called stupid, and so I am, when any thing takes my thoughts away into meditative abstraction; so I never troubled myself to turn round my head, until the clatter of a host of horses' feet came over my ears from behind, and a wild cry of "The Kearneys! the Kearneys!" accompanied the sudden rising of the surrounding windows.

What a strange and impressive cavalcade was this, which, with the immense and horrified crowd that followed it, was now almost under my very window. There were horsemen behind and horsemen before, but no music, or sound such as usually accompanies a military spectacle, and the buzz and murmur that ran through the multitude had an awfulness in it, as if it were the low and deep voice of justice herself, and seemed to have the sternness, mixed with the horror, of a generally awarded and righteous sentence of death. There was something very dreadful in the arrangement of the cavalcade. Behind the first troop of military came three vehicles of the lowest sort used as conveyances in Ireland, called jingles; which, being a species of double car, upon springs, are considerably elevated above the heads of the people. The first of these carried a temporary gallows, which was to be erected on the spot where the murder had been committed; the last con-

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tained three coffins; and in the centre jingle sat the wretched men, the execrated objects of this horrid preparation.

"Lord save us," said I, as I surveyed the whole, "but it is an awful sight to see a father and his two sons carted off together to their death;" two of them young and even handsome men, and, together with the father, such as you never could have supposed, from their looks, to be capable of committing so atrocious a deed. The three sat together in the jingle, with a bare-headed priest placed between each, and holding a crucifix close to their faces. They were all dressed in black, their arms pinioned to their sides, with the white caps of execution on their heads, and the ropes already hanging from their bared necks. The wanness of death already gave their countenances a blanched cadaverousness, which was absolutely fearful to behold; the young men, in particular, seemed quite overcome with the horror of guilt and of their situation, and had lost all power over themselves, so that as the vehicle jolted slowly on to their death, their heads wagged backwards and forwards with every motion, and when they ventured to try to look before or behind, their eye fixed on the great frightful gallows, rumbling on in their view, on which they were about to be suspended by the neck, and behind came the row of coffins which already gaped for their corpses. The crowd that moved on at their side looked up in their languid countenances with impressions such as could not easily be effaced, and the only sounds that were heard, besides the suppressed murmur of the people, was a startling howl, which now and then burst from a band of women, who followed the car bearing the coffins, among which was the wretched wife of one and mother of two of the men whom she was, with characteristic hardiness, now following to the gibbet.

The melancholy procession passed away from before my eyes, and the occasional howl of the women came with sickening impression over my ears, as the whole moved off in the distance, and as I reflected upon the miserable end of all incorrigible workers of

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iniquity. I was afterward told by those who witnessed the execution, that the hardened old wretch who had urged her family into the commission of these atrocities had the heart to stand at the gallows' foot, while that husband and these two sons, which constituted all her earthly ties, were, for the crimes to which she had encouraged them, struggling in the agonies which launched them into eternity.

But the most painful part of this whole tragedy related to the unfortunate widow of the murdered grieve, whom her terrible misfortune had entirely bereft of her senses, and for whom the sympathetic squire made ample provision, as a confirmed and hopeless lunatic. The broken-hearted widow took her unfortunate daughter back to her cottage, and willingly aided in the delusion into which the poor creature had gradually fallen; that Owen Lambert was still attending the trial of the Kearneys, from which he was hourly expected to return. Whenever, therefore, the morning was fine, the interesting maniac went forth and sat patiently on a stone at the door, to wait, as she said, until her Owen came home from Dublin.

Curiosity, and that melancholy interest with which unmerited misfortune is always invested, led me one day to swerve off my way as I went to the Dublin mountains, to try if I could see her. Sure enough, as the people there say, I did see this pretty and demented young widow, sitting as usual in the sunshine at the cottage-door, and singing sillily to herself, as she carelessly knitted some trifling article. When she perceived me she rose, and looking anxiously in my face, came forward to meet me. "Begging your pardon, sir," she said, in the liquid softness of the Dublin *patois*, and courtesying as she drew near, "did your honour come from Dublin this morning?"

"I did," said I sadly, observing the poor thing's look of melancholy anxiety.

"Maybe, sir," she continued, "you can tell me something of one Owen Lambert, that's there at the trial.—Ah, he is long, long of coming!"

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"So he is," said I, "but you'll see him by-and-by."

"Will I?" she said, a gleam of joy coming over her features. "Alas! but I am weary, weary, so long waiting to meet him."

"Are you?" I said, forgetting, in my pity, the poor girl's insanity. "God help you! broken-heart,—but you will meet him, I doubt not, in a better world!"

THE END.

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